HOW TO BE A PYRRHONIST

What was it like to be a practitioner of Pyrrhonist skepticism? This important volume brings together for the first time a selection of Richard Bett's essays on ancient Pyrrhonism, allowing readers a better understanding of the key aspects of this school of thought. The volume examines Pyrrhonism's manner of self presentation, including its methods of writing, its desire to show how special it is, and its use of humor; it considers Pyrrhonism's argumentative procedures regarding specific topics, such as signs, space, or the Modes; and it explores what it meant in practice to live as a Pyrrhonist, including the kind of ethical outlook which Pyrrhonism might allow and, in general, the character of a skeptical life and how far these might strike us as feasible or desirable. It also shows how Pyrrhonism often raises questions that matter to us today, both in our everyday lives and in our philosophical reflection.

RICHARD BETT is Professor and Chair of Philosophy at the Johns Hopkins University. His translations of works by Sextus Empiricus include *Against the Logicians* (Cambridge, 2005) and *Against the Physicists* (Cambridge, 2012), and he is also the editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism* (Cambridge, 2010).

HOW TO BE A PYRRHONIST

The Practice and Significance of Pyrrhonian Skepticism

RICHARD BETT
The Johns Hopkins University

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108471077
DOI: 10.1017/9781108557603

© Richard Bett 2019

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2019

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-108-47107-7 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

Preface *page* vii
Acknowledgments xiv
List of Abbreviations xvi

PART I HOW THE PYRRHONISTS PRESENT THEMSELVES 1

1 The Pyrrhonist's Dilemma: What to Write If You Have Nothing to Say 3

2 Why Care Whether Skepticism Is Different from Other Philosophies? 24

3 Humor as Philosophical Subversion, Especially in the Skeptics 46

PART II PYRRHONISTS AT WORK: SPECIFIC TOPICS 67

4 The Sign in the Pyrrhonian Tradition 69

5 Aenesidemus the Anti-Physicist 89

6 The Modes in Sextus: Theory and Practice 108

PART III LIFE AS A PYRRHONIST 131

7 What Kind of Self Can a Greek Skeptic Have? 133

8 How Ethical Can an Ancient Skeptic Be? 151

9 Living as a Skeptic 168

PART IV INTERSECTIONS OF PYRRHONISM WITH CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT 187

10 Can an Ancient Greek Skeptic Be *Eudaimôn* (or Happy)? And What Difference Does the Answer Make to Us? 189

11 On Pyrrhonism, Stances, and Believing What You Want 209

12 Can We Be Ancient Skeptics? 226

Bibliography 244
Index Locorum 255
Index 262

Preface

Like many scholars whose careers are at a relatively advanced stage, I have published quite a few essays in scattered locations. Many of these came from invitations to participate in conferences and were published in volumes that resulted from those conferences, volumes that are often obscure and not widely available. In addition, a few of them have previously been available only in a language other than English.

While I have written on a variety of philosophers and schools of philosophy, the fact is that it is ancient Greek skepticism with which I am principally associated in the scholarly world, and this is no accident; all of my book-length publications, including translations of Sextus Empiricus, and a clear majority of my articles have been on some aspect of skepticism. And this has led to a self-reinforcing tendency: because I have become known as a specialist in this area, I am more likely to be invited to contribute papers on skepticism than on anything else, and I have generally been happy to oblige. So a substantial body of papers on Greek skepticism has grown up over the years, and I started to think it would be a good idea to bring a group of them together in a single volume. I have also found that many of my essays on ancient Greek skepticism share a number of recurring themes. I therefore thought a selection of these essays published together in a single volume would serve two purposes: first, it would allow the more obscure to become better known, and second, bringing them all together would serve to highlight themes that I have touched on repeatedly from different angles, and that seem to me important.

It was not easy deciding which essays to include and which to leave out – and I received a lot of help on this, on which more later. But explaining how the volume took the shape that it did may be helpful in giving readers a sense of what I hope will be its contribution to the field. My reputation as a specialist in ancient Greek skepticism first arose mainly as I worked out a comprehensive picture of the development of the

Pyrrhonist skeptical tradition, from Pyrrho himself through Aenesidemus to Sextus Empiricus. This culminated in my book *Pyrrho, His Antecedents, and His Legacy* (2000). This aspect of my work is well known, and so I thought the new volume should largely avoid this familiar ground. In fact, while the developmental picture has continued to serve as a backdrop in some of my work, it has not generally been a central topic in the essays I have published since the book appeared. The essays included here were all written since the turn of the century, and only the earliest ("The Sign in the Pyrrhonian Tradition") makes the development of Pyrrhonism, including the order of composition of Sextus' works, a major focus of attention.

Other selection criteria that proved important were as follows: (1) I have not included papers written for handbook or companion volumes, of which I have quite a few; while sometimes the topics of these papers prompted me to extend my thinking in ways that might be of interest,[1] they include too much basic survey of material to make them suitable for a volume of this kind. (2) I have omitted papers that include a lot of discussion of the Greek language and matters of translation, since I am hoping that this volume will be reasonably accessible to those who do not know ancient Greek. (3) To create a certain unity of subject matter, I have chosen papers that are mainly on the Pyrrhonist tradition of skepticism rather than the Academic tradition. This was not too difficult, since after the very earliest phase of my career I have consistently gravitated more toward the Pyrrhonist side of things. On a similar basis, I have also omitted papers in which Nietzsche is a central component, even if they also involve Pyrrhonist skepticism to a significant degree. Still, some of the papers do touch briefly on the Academic tradition, and one ("Humor as Philosophical Subversion, Especially in the Skeptics") even ventures for a time outside skepticism altogether, while Nietzsche puts in a few appearances too. But this just shows something about the philosophical interest Pyrrhonism can arouse: it is sometimes hard to discuss without at least a glance at how it intersects with other ancient or modern philosophical movements. Most of the chapters have to do mainly, or even entirely, with Pyrrhonism as represented by Sextus Empiricus, the only Pyrrhonist of whom we have complete surviving works. But Aenesidemus also gets some attention, and Pyrrho himself occasionally gets a look-in. However, as I said, the development of Pyrrhonism is not a major concern in the volume, and it is not organized according to any historical principle.

[1] For example, Bett 2017, cited in one of the subsequent chapters.

So how is it organized? This brings me back to the point about recurring themes. One of the anonymous referees who commented on my proposal for this volume made the following very perceptive comment: "I get the distinct impression that Bett has, whether he realizes it or not, been preoccupied lately with the question of how 'his stuff' relates to philosophers around him and why they should take the time to read about it." It is true that I never really formulated an explicit agenda of this kind; and there is an element of coincidence in how some of the essays have turned out, in that at least two were written for conferences where the organizers specifically requested that we give some attention to the contemporary relevance or repercussions of the ancient views we were to write about. However, this way of approaching ancient Greek skepticism clearly caught on with me, because some of the other essays were written under no such restriction – I was given a free hand to pick my topic, so long as it was something to do with skepticism – yet I chose to explore issues that might be of contemporary interest; this applies to "Can We Be Ancient Skeptics?" and to some extent to "How Ethical Can an Ancient Skeptic Be?" More generally, I have been concerned to show Pyrrhonism as a philosophically interesting outlook. We may or may not find it attractive, and these essays get into a number of problematic features of it, as well as some more appealing ones; but whether one finds the latter or the former more prominent, I feel there is a great deal about Pyrrhonism that is at least fruitfully challenging. I hope you will feel the same way.

I see two main overlapping concerns in the essays I have selected, and the title of the volume attempts to capture these. The first is a concern with what we might call the *practice* of Pyrrhonism. Rather than addressing the general contours of the position (as much of the scholarship has done), a good many of the chapters here are interested in getting a closer look at how it actually works in detail. This can include its ways of appealing to the reader (Part I, "How the Pyrrhonists Present Themselves"), such as its methods of writing (Chapter 1), its desire to show how special it is (Chapter 2), or its use of humor (Chapter 3); it can include its approach to particular topics (Part II, "Pyrrhonists at Work: Specific Topics"), such as signs (Chapter 4), space (Chapter 5), or the Modes (Chapter 6); and it can include its practical consequences (Part III, "Life as a Pyrrhonist"), such as what a skeptical self would look like (Chapter 7), what kind of ethical outlook it might include (Chapter 8), or in general, the character of a skeptical life (Chapter 9) – and how far these may strike us as feasible or desirable. The second main thread is a concern with how Pyrrhonism, rather than being of purely antiquarian interest, often raises questions that

may make a difference to people today. The nature of the skeptical life and its feasibility (Part III) come under this heading as well, insofar as they may shed light on what we can or should expect from our own lives. But under this heading I also have in mind ways in which Pyrrhonism can make a *philosophical* difference for us (Part IV, "Intersections of Pyrrhonism with Contemporary Thought"): how setting Pyrrhonist ideas alongside ideas in contemporary philosophy, for example about happiness (Chapter 10) or about voluntarism in epistemology and the philosophy of science (Chapter 11), or reflecting on how Pyrrhonism might fare in a contemporary intellectual context (Chapter 12), can be illuminating for us both as interpreters of Pyrrhonism and as philosophers today. It will be seen that these categories are somewhat fluid, and in a few cases I was unsure in which of the four parts to place a chapter. But I hope the division into four parts, and my identification of the two main concerns animating the chapters, will serve as a useful organizing framework.

My thinking about Pyrrhonism has of course evolved over the years. None of the essays in this volume advances interpretations on which I have fundamentally changed my mind. But there are numerous issues on which the alert reader will notice some differences in perspective between different chapters. Among those I have noticed in preparing the essays for republication here are the following: (1) whether the skeptic's lack of robust commitment to ethical or other values is a defect or a virtue;[2] (2) whether the two different accounts Sextus gives of how suspension of judgment yields *ataraxia* are consistent with one another; (3) whether the interpretation of suspension of judgment as a psychological effect, rather than a rational commitment, can be sustained across the entirety of his thought; and (4) whether Sextus' claim to be a genuine inquirer while having a well-honed procedure for bringing about suspension of judgment, or his claim to practice religion in the same way as an ordinary member of society while suspending judgment on the existence of god, are hopeless inconsistencies or subtle meta-level applications of the Pyrrhonist

[2] I was taken to task by Eichorn 2014, 143, for speaking in some places as if robust commitment was always a good thing (think of the committed Nazi, etc.). While I have not entirely abandoned my worries about the skeptic's washed-out existence, discussed especially in Chapters 7 and 8, the point was well taken; and in fact I had already, in some more recent essays (Chapters 9 and 12), started speaking with approval of the skeptic's reluctance to come to conclusions. Whether this newfound appreciation was a reaction to the recent rise (or perhaps, the newly overt and unabashed expression) in many countries of visceral and unreflective political and social attitudes on the right – emphasizing nationalism, contempt for political correctness, suspicion of expertise, and a great deal else that most of us in the academy find appalling – I am not sure.

method of assembling oppositions.[3] As someone who obviously finds skepticism congenial – I would not have spent all these years studying it if I didn't identify with it to some extent – I have no problem including some opposing viewpoints in the volume taken as a whole. I won't go so far as to say that I want you to suspend judgment about the merits of these competing viewpoints. But if they cause you to reflect more deeply on these topics, and maybe come to a more fully thought-through point of view on them yourself, that seems to me all to the good.

Most of these chapters were written in the past decade (as of the time of writing); and even aside from the one new essay (Chapter 6), two have not yet been published in the volumes for which they were originally commissioned (Chapters 3 and 12). In the case of the older ones (I am thinking especially of Chapters 4, 7, and 10), I suspect I might have chosen a somewhat different focus if I was writing on the same topics today – partly because of my own evolving views on Pyrrhonism, and partly because of subsequent developments either in the scholarship on ancient Greek philosophy or in contemporary philosophical debate on the issues I deal with. But, quite apart from my lack of concern about conflicting interpretations, mentioned just now, there is a limit to how much one can change an essay and still count as republishing the *same* essay. So I have contented myself with some minor rewording – for example, to take out or explain references to other papers in the volumes where these essays originally appeared – a few additional references to pertinent work that has appeared since their original publication, and other adjustments of the same kind. In keeping with my desire to make the volume accessible to non-classicists, I have also adopted a consistent policy of transliterating Greek – some of the essays originally used the Greek alphabet – except in a very few places in footnotes where purely textual issues are at stake (and where only those who know ancient Greek will be interested). A few essays have a nod toward the places in which they were originally presented, in a choice of example or a reference to scholarship by someone from that locale; these too seem to me harmless and I have not attempted to change them. All in all, then, anyone who has read these essays before will find little alteration.

[3] The one topic on which I wish I had been able to include a complete essay here is skepticism and religion. But of the two papers I have written on this subject (Bett 2009; Bett 2015c), the first falls into the handbook/companion category, while much of the second is rather more detailed and technical than is appropriate for this volume. (It is also published by Cambridge University Press, which understandably considers it bad form to recycle materials it has already published.) However, Sextus' attitude toward religion does receive some mention in the essays that are included.

Many people are thanked in the individual essays. It has been an immense privilege to be invited to participate in all the conferences – some in spectacular and memorable places – and to contribute to all the collections of papers that were the starting points of the materials in this volume, as well as to receive so much thoughtful and helpful comment on earlier versions. Scholarship in ancient Greek philosophy today is an international collaboration that is intensely serious but also, I think, quite a bit more friendly and congenial than it was at the beginning of my career. I see this as part of a more general transformation in philosophy; while much more work undoubtedly remains to be done, there is a lot less peremptory dismissiveness and a lot more concern for inclusiveness, in all its many dimensions, than there used to be. In any case, returning to the specific milieu of ancient Greek philosophy, I feel very lucky to belong to this world; and now that I am pretty clearly in the latter part of my career, I hope I am doing enough to help keep it as vibrant as it now is.

There are a few additional people I would like to thank for help that relates specifically to the production of this volume. First, Hilary Gaskin, the philosophy editor at Cambridge University Press, who was encouraging about my initial proposal for the volume, and who then gave me very useful comments at several stages, which allowed me to get the volume into a shape that was practical for the press to publish. This was not simply a matter of bringing down the number of essays to something viable (though that was part of it); it was also a matter of getting into focus the unifying themes of the essays I wanted to include, and giving the volume a definite character, as opposed to being an amorphous pile of papers in the general area of Pyrrhonism. My first proposed title for the volume, "Ventures in Pyrrhonist Skepticism," may give some idea of how vague I was about this to begin with. The two anonymous readers of the proposal were also extremely helpful in this regard. The one with the perceptive comment noted above helped me to see better what I was doing. But it was the other reader who, while also making encouraging comments about the general project, pointed to a real deficiency in how I was conceiving the volume, and suggested that I think more about how the essays hang together, and why I had chosen these ones and not others. The three of them together made a big difference; without them, I would not have been able to write these introductory remarks in anything like their present form, and the layout of the volume would have been much less clearly defined.

Prefaces to volumes of this kind often include a long list of people with whom the author has discussed issues or shown drafts of papers. I don't

have a list like that. This is partly because, as I've said, individuals who helped me improve a given chapter are thanked in the footnotes to that chapter. But it's also because I don't spend a lot of time trying out ideas on colleagues at an early stage – which I think is one impetus for such lists. For whatever reason (maybe just because I am somewhat of a loner by temperament), I prefer to write my papers by myself and *then* see what people think of them; I value feedback – no question about that – but I don't tend to seek it until I already have a story more or less worked out on my own. But there is one notable exception to this pattern: I thank my Johns Hopkins colleague Michael Williams for a great many conversations over the years that have enhanced my understanding of Pyrrhonist skepticism. Mike is known mainly as a leading contemporary epistemologist. But he also has substantial historical interests and expertise, and this includes Sextus. We have taught a graduate seminar together on (mostly) ancient Greek skepticism three times now, spanning a period in which most of these essays were written, and each time I have learned more from him. It would be impossible to tease out exactly which of whatever insights this volume contains owe something to discussions with him, but I am sure they are not few in number.

Acknowledgments

Listed below are the original places of publication of all the chapters except Chapter 6, which is new. I am grateful both to the editors of these original volumes and to their publishers for permission to reprint.

Chapter 1. "The Pyrrhonist's Dilemma: What to Write If You Have Nothing to Say," in Michael Erler and Jan Erik Hessler, eds., *Argument und Literarischer Form in antiker Philosophie*, Akten des 3. Kongresses der Gesellschaft für antike Philosophie 2010 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 389–410.

Chapter 2. "Why Care Whether Skepticism Is Different from Other Philosophies?," *Philosophie antique* 15 (2015), 27–52 (Special issue entitled *Questions sur le scepticisme pyrrhonien*), ed. Thomas Bénatouil, Jean-Baptiste Gourinat, and Michel Narcy (Villeneuve D'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion).

Chapter 3. "Humor as Philosophical Subversion, Especially in the Skeptics," in Pierre Destrée and Franco Trivigno, eds., *Laughter and Comedy in Ancient Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

Chapter 4. "The Sign in the Pyrrhonian Tradition," published as "Le signe dans la tradition pyrrhonienne," in José Kany-Turpin, ed., *Signe et prédiction dans l'antiquité* (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2005), 29–48.

Chapter 5. "Aenesidemus the Anti-Physicist," in G. Ranocchia, Ch. Helmig, and Ch. Horn, eds., *Space in Hellenistic Philosophy: Critical Studies in Ancient Physics* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 141–58.

Chapter 6. "The Modes in Sextus: Theory and Practice" was written specially for this volume.

Chapter 7. "What Kind of Self Can a Greek Skeptic Have?," in Pauliina Remes and Juha Sihvola, eds., *Ancient Philosophy of the Self* (New York: Springer, 2008), 139–54.

Chapter 8. "How Ethical Can an Ancient Skeptic Be?," in Diego Machuca, ed., *Pyrrhonism in Ancient, Modern, and Contemporary Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), 3–17.

Chapter 9. "Living as a Skeptic," published as "Als Skeptiker leben," in Gerhard Ernst, ed., *Philosophie als Lebenskunst: Antike Vorbilder, moderne Perspektiven* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2016), 232–56.

Chapter 10. "Can an Ancient Greek Skeptic Be *Eudaimôn* (or Happy)? And What Difference Does the Answer Make to Us?," *Journal of Ancient Philosophy* 6, no. 1 (2012), ed. Marco Zingano, online: www.journals.usp.br/filosofiaantiga/index.

Chapter 11. "On Pyrrhonism, Stances, and Believing What You Want," *International Journal for the Study of Skepticism* 5 (2015), ed. Diego Machuca and Duncan Pritchard (Leiden: Brill), 126–44.

Chapter 12. "Can We Be Ancient Skeptics?," published as "Le scepticisme ancien est-il viable aujourd'hui?," in Diego Machuca and Stéphane Marchand, eds., *Les raisons du doute: études sur le scepticisme antique* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, forthcoming).

Abbreviations

DK	H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th edition (Berlin: Weidmann, 1951).
DL	Diogenes Laertius
KSA	Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980).
LS	A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
LSJ	Liddell-Scott-Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968 and subsequent printings – Revised Supplement, 1996).
M 1–6	Sextus Empiricus, *Against Those in the Disciplines* (*Pros Mathêmatikous*, or in Latin, *Adversus Mathematicos*)
M 7–11	Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians*, *Against the Physicists*, and *Against the Ethicists*, which were almost certainly preceded by a lost book or books explaining the skeptical outlook in general terms. The whole work is referred to by Sextus as *Skeptika Hupomnêmata*, *Skeptical Treatises*. The label *M* 7–11 is due to these books having been wrongly thought to be a continuation of *M* 1–6; despite the obvious error, this nomenclature is deeply entrenched.
PH	Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (*Purrôneiai Hupotupôseis*)

Other abbreviations for ancient texts are given in the Index Locorum.

CHAPTER 1

The Pyrrhonist's Dilemma
What to Write If You Have Nothing to Say

"All human beings by nature desire to know," says Aristotle at the opening of his *Metaphysics* (980a21). One might find various reasons to take issue with that claim. On the most everyday level, one might point to the seemingly willful blindness to reality of large sections of the voting population, in some countries at least. Or, on a more theoretical level, one might hold views to the effect that human beings systematically conceal from themselves certain important truths that would be too uncomfortable to hold consistently in view; ideas of this kind may be found, for example, in Nietzsche, Freud or Sartre.

How would the Pyrrhonian skeptics react to Aristotle's claim? They would certainly question the assumption that the desire for knowledge is built into human nature – just as they would question any other claim about the nature of things. But I think there is evidence that some Pyrrhonists went much further than this. Aenesidemus, who seems to have started a self-consciously Pyrrhonian movement or tradition in the first century BC, is reported describing the Pyrrhonist as happy precisely because he does *not* think he knows anything, by contrast with other philosophers who are tormented by the fruitless search for knowledge (Photius, *Bibl.* 169b21–30). And Pyrrho himself, the much earlier figure from whom Aenesidemus claims to draw inspiration, is represented by his follower Timon as not troubling himself with questions about the nature of the world around us – with this lack of concern being one source of his amazingly tranquil demeanor (DL 9.64–5, Aristocles in Eusebius, *Praep. evang.* 14.18.19). Now, what of Sextus Empiricus, the one Pyrrhonist of whom we have substantial surviving writings? Has he too given up on any attempt to discover the truth, and if so, does he too consider this condition preferable to that of those philosophers who retain this desire? I shall argue that the answer is predominantly "yes," although the matter is not entirely straightforward.

This then leads to another question, which will be my central concern. To the extent that Sextus has indeed given up on the search for truth, what is his purpose in writing what are clearly, in some sense, philosophical works, and what strategies of writing does he employ given that purpose? Of course, some skeptically inclined philosophers preferred not to write anything; the Academics Arcesilaus and Carneades, as well as Pyrrho, are obvious examples – and some might also include Socrates on this list. But a skeptic who does write had better be careful not to seem like a philosopher of the usual stripe. The question is what that requires him to avoid, and what else it encourages him to develop, and this is what I want to consider for the case of Sextus. First, though, we need to discuss the philosophical stance that Sextus adopts, such that he faces these constraints on his manner of writing. From now on I shall use the terms "skeptic" and "Pyrrhonist" interchangeably, referring, unless otherwise specified, to Sextus' understanding of those terms.

I

Sextus tells us in the first book of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* that the skeptics are people who started out with the goal of discovering the truth (*PH* 1.12, 26). Presumably, both in Sextus' opinion and in fact, this is a goal shared by most other people of a theoretical bent. In the proto-skeptics' case, admittedly, it is not a goal held purely for its own sake; rather, the discovery of the truth is thought of as a means to the attainment of *ataraxia*, tranquility. It is *ataraxia* that is given as the skeptics' *telos* or aim in life, or at least, *ataraxia* as regards matters of opinion – that is to say, matters that would be addressed in the course of the kinds of investigations that were initially hoped to lead to the truth about things (*PH* 1.25–30). Sextus may well also have believed (not without some warrant) that this goal, too, was much more widely shared; certainly his accounts of how and why the skeptic is better off than non-skeptical philosophers (*PH* 1.25–30, 3.235–238, *M* 11.110–167) appeal to the skeptic's tranquility by contrast with the extreme anxiety of the others, as if it is common ground that tranquility is what it makes most sense ultimately to aim for. In any case, according to him, it is both the aim the skeptics started out with and the aim that, as fully fledged skeptics, they still retain. What is crucial, though, is that the route by which they actually achieve *ataraxia* is quite different from the one by which they originally expected to achieve it.

Instead of discovering the truth, according to Sextus, the skeptic "fell into disagreement of equal strength" (*enepesen eis tên isosthenê diaphônian*,

PH 1.26) – that is, fell into a position of being confronted by conflicting theories and impressions each of which struck him as equally persuasive. The "lack of uniformity" (*anômalia*, *PH* 1.12) in the theories and/or impressions on any given topic is stressed as the impetus behind the original search for the truth. But although the initial hope was that one would be able to sift through these conflicting data and determine which theories or impressions were the true ones, the outcome is that one is simply stuck with the conflict. The Greek verb translated "fell into" (*enepesen*), here as often, denotes an involuntary outcome, and the implication is very often that this outcome is unwelcome. But while this is how it may seem at first, in the present case there is an unexpected bonus. Faced with these conflicting theories "of equal strength," one cannot but suspend judgment as to the truth of any of them. And this suspension of judgment, in turn, leads to precisely the tranquility that one was seeking in the first place (*PH* 1.26). This result is described as occurring *tuchikôs* (*PH* 1.26, cf. 29), frequently translated "by chance,"[1] also "fortuitously."[2] Clearly part of the point is that this result is again something not under our control, and that, on its first occurrence at least, it could not have been foreseen; there is also a suggestion that this was a fortunate turn of events, making "fortuitously" perhaps preferable. But what *tuchikôs* is *not* intended to suggest – and here both the usual English translations are less than perfect – is that this result is simply a once-off occurrence that is not reproducible; that this is not the idea is clear from Sextus' analogy for the relationship between tranquility and the suspension of judgment that precedes it – "as a shadow follows a body" (*PH* 1.29). And it is also clear from the settled skeptical procedure that Sextus describes in the opening sections of *PH* Book 1.

This procedure is summed up in the following often-quoted sentence: "The skeptical ability is one that produces oppositions among things that appear and things that are thought in any way whatsoever, one from which, because of the equal strength in the opposing objects and accounts, we come first to suspension of judgment, and after that to tranquility" (*PH* 1.8).[3] Here it is clear that tranquility regularly and predictably follows suspension of judgment; the skeptic is someone who has developed a technique for reliably generating suspension of judgment, and thereby reliably producing tranquility. This text does not actually say that tranquility is the aim of the whole process. But, as we saw, tranquility is later

[1] So translated in Bury 1933; Hallie 1985; and Mates 1996.
[2] See Annas and Barnes 1994; also "fortuitement" in Pellegrin 1997.
[3] Unless otherwise indicated, translations are my own.

identified as the skeptic's *telos*; and besides, another passage does include *ataraxia* within the characterization of the purpose of the intellectual activities in which the skeptic engages. Responding to the question whether the skeptic "reasons about nature" or "discusses physics" (*phusiologei*), Sextus says that the skeptics do not do so in order to make definite assertions about how things are, but that they do so "for the sake of opposing to every argument an equal argument and for the sake of tranquility" (*PH* 1.18). He adds that they approach "the logical and the ethical parts of what is called philosophy" in the same way – logic, physics, and ethics being understood as the three standard parts of philosophy in the post-Aristotelian period. Sextus' refusal to employ the term "philosophy" in his own voice may be due to the assumption that self-described philosophers generally take themselves to know at least some of the answers to their questions.[4] More radically – to return to the point with which I began – it may be due to the fact that the term *philosophia*, "love of wisdom," itself is not one with which a skeptic would wish to identify. It is not the desire for wisdom that motivates the skeptic – whether or not this might be thought to lead to tranquility – but the desire to create an intellectual equipoise (and thereby to produce tranquility). As we shall see, Sextus does not uniformly decline to adopt the term "philosophy" to describe his own activity, and there may be a point to this vacillation. Be that as it may, the present passage makes clear that the skeptic discusses all the same topics as those who do claim to practice philosophy; the difference is in the purpose or attitude with which these topics are approached.

I have spoken so far as if Sextus consistently and single-mindedly seeks to promote suspension of judgment, and thereby tranquility. But this is not so. The term *skeptikos* means "inquirer," and Sextus begins *PH* by

[4] That Sextus, with his use of the phrase "what is called philosophy," is here both questioning the pretensions of those who use the term "philosophy" of their own activities, and declining to adopt the term himself, seems clear from his use of the qualifiers *legomenos* and *kaloumenos* ("said to be" or "called") in other places. He commonly applies them to pieces of dogmatic terminology, and the effect is both to challenge the dogmatists' claim to deliver on the theories that would legitimize this terminology and to distance himself from its use. See, for example, "the so-called non-rational animals" in the first of the Ten Modes in *PH* 1 (61, 62, 74, 76). Calling these animals "non-rational" (*aloga*) requires that one has a clear and defensible distinction between the rational and the non-rational; Sextus doubts that the dogmatists have this, and he would not attempt such a distinction himself, and the term "so-called" (*kaloumena*) draws attention to both points. The same is true of numerous theoretical concepts in logic or physics; see, e.g., *PH* 1.60, 2.95, 163, 166–7, 215, 3.30, 42, 54, 62, 102, 249, 270–2, *M* 7.225, 8.12, 109, 10.2, 220, 261, 11.180, 243, 1.179, 6.47, 51. In the passage at issue in the main text – and in others, as we shall see – he is making the same distancing move concerning the term "philosophy" itself; we will also see him doing the same with terms for the standard parts of philosophy. For more on Sextus' attitude toward philosophy, see Chapter 2 in this book, especially Section IV.

saying that the skeptic is still investigating, that is, still trying to discover the truth – by contrast with two other groups, those who think they have discovered the truth and those who have decided that it cannot be discovered (1.1–4). Now clearly this attitude is incompatible with the one we were just describing. If one has decided that suspension of judgment is the surest route to tranquility, and therefore concentrates on producing and maintaining suspension of judgment, one is no longer trying to discover the truth. The skeptic may have started out trying to discover the truth, thinking that tranquility was to be attained this way; but once he finds that tranquility is in fact achieved after the search for truth fails and suspension of judgment ensues instead, the project of inquiry seems to be replaced by a project of developing an expertise in the production of equally powerful opposing arguments.

Against this, Casey Perin has argued that Sextus' description of the skeptic's "ability" at producing oppositions (*PH* 1.8) is compatible with his still being engaged in the additional enterprise of seeking the truth.[5] But while it is true that there is strictly speaking no inconsistency here, it is also true that this passage – which seems designed to capture in one sentence the core of what skepticism consists in – contains no hint of any continuing search for truth; besides, the passage on the spirit in which the skeptic engages in physics (and logic and ethics, *PH* 1.18) is clearly *not* compatible with any such search. Perin acknowledges this last point[6] and regards the passage on physics as an anomaly; more generally, he concedes that there is no single consistent account that will cover everything Sextus says. To me, however, the central passage on the skeptic's "ability" seems to belong much more naturally with the passage about the skeptic's engagement with physics, with the notion of the skeptic as a genuine inquirer as the anomalous element. Indeed, Sextus regularly describes his own activity as that of producing suspension of judgment by the systematic juxtaposition of opposing considerations. This is how he introduces the Modes (*PH* 1.31–4, 36), which offer a set of ready-made techniques for generating suspension of judgment. In the opening pages of *PH* he also says that "the principle (*archê*) of the skeptical fellowship is above all there being an equal argument opposed to every argument" (*PH* 1.12); this has nothing to do with the search for truth, everything to do with the preconditions for suspension of judgment. Similar remarks can be found in the longer work,

[5] Perin 2010a, especially chapter 1; also Perin 2006. Another account that takes the notion of the skeptic as an "inquirer" seriously and at face value is Vogt 2012a, chapter 5.

[6] Perin 2010a, 118, n. 6.

the surviving portions of which – *Against the Logicians*, *Against the Physicists*, and *Against the Ethicists* – cover roughly the same ground as *PH* 2 and 3 (*M* 7.443, 8.159–60).[7]

Being an inquirer is undeniably part of the skeptics' self-image, built into the term "skeptic" itself. Although "suspensive"(*ephektikê*) is another of the various terms for the Pyrrhonist outlook (*PH* 1.7), and Sextus occasionally calls himself and his colleagues "suspenders of judgment" (*PH* 2.10, *M* 11.152, cf. *PH* 1.209, 2.9) – also, somewhat more frequently, "bringers of impasse" (*aporêtikoi*), which seems (at least in Sextus' writings) to amount to more or less the same thing – "skeptic" is overwhelmingly the more common term in his works. But inquiry, in any normal sense of the term, has no role in his more detailed descriptions of what skepticism is and does. Nor does it seem to be what he is actually doing in the works themselves, where suspension of judgment is routinely the outcome, and the search for the truth does not seem to figure as any part of the enterprise. And so I am unconvinced by Perin's attempt to place inquiry at the center of what the skeptic is up to, and incline to agree with the numerous other scholars who have found the notion of inquiry somewhat unhelpful in understanding Sextus' brand of skepticism.[8] If "inquiry" simply means not having decided that one knows the truth or that the truth is unknowable, then the skeptic, as Sextus characterizes him, is indeed an inquirer. But the claim that the skeptic "is still investigating," which is how Sextus introduces the notion of the skeptic as an inquirer, sounds as if it promises more than this; and that is the promise on which the rest of his work does not deliver.

II

Now, if this is how we should understand Sextus' skepticism, what is his purpose in writing? Although there are some notable exceptions, such as Plato, philosophers generally write with a view to leading the reader most effectively toward whatever conclusions they consider justified. But Sextus is not trying to promote any conclusions; rather, he is engaged in a certain kind of activity, the generating or maintaining of suspension of judgment. How does his writing contribute to this? In the first instance, we should presumably consider it an aspect, or an illustration, of that very activity.

[7] On the fact that the longer work in its surviving form is incomplete, having lost a general portion corresponding to *PH* 1, see Janáček 1963.

[8] See, e.g., Palmer 2000; Striker 2001; Grgic 2006; Marchand 2010.

With the partial exception of *PH* 1, which is a general description of what skepticism is, the works exhibit on a grand scale the production of opposing positions on the same topics. Sextus frequently tells us that suspension of judgment is the outcome, and this is just what we would expect from his characterization of the skeptic's "ability" in *PH* 1.8. The works, then, are part of Sextus' own practice as a skeptic. But there must be more to them than this. These are not private diaries or workbooks; Sextus is clearly also writing for others to read. Nor do they have the form of Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* or some of the writings of Seneca, which, whether or not they were written for others to read,[9] are presented as exercises of inner reflection with a view to self-improvement – the sort of works that are most favorable to Pierre Hadot's conception of ancient philosophy as centered around the care of the soul.[10] Although Sextus tells us that the goal of the whole enterprise is tranquility, and although he also speaks of skeptical utterances as reports of the speaker's feelings (*PH* 1.187) or of how things strike one at the time (*PH* 1.4), his writings are actually remarkably lacking in any introspective quality. (This is just one aspect of his extraordinary elusiveness; we really know almost nothing about him either as a historical figure or as a personality.) He does not come across as someone engaged in any kind of personal quest, but as someone imparting a message to his readers. This is most obvious from the first book of *PH*; there is no point in writing a general introduction to the nature of Pyrrhonism unless one wants outsiders to read it. But the tone of instruction, of the dissemination of a message to readers, is present throughout his work.

What message, and what readers? Sextus never tells us explicitly why or for whom he is writing. But there are three obvious, and not mutually exclusive, possibilities. One is that he is defending skepticism against attacks on it from other philosophers, showing that it is not, as they allege, inconsistent or impossible to put into practice in real life. In a few places Sextus is quite explicit that this is what he is doing. In the opening pages of *PH* he says, "Those who say that the skeptics do away with the appearances seem to me not to be listening to what we say" (*PH* 1.19), and then explains the place of appearances in skepticism. At the opening of Book 2 of the same work he addresses an objection to the effect that skeptics are

[9] I do not think anyone would deny that Seneca intended his work to be read by others. The consensus today, however, seems to be that Marcus Aurelius' work was a set of purely personal notes that has survived accidentally; see, e.g., Sellars 2010; Gill 2013, xv; Van Ackeren 2013, n. 15. However, this particular issue makes no difference for my claim here about Sextus – that his work looks nothing like a "spiritual exercise."

[10] See, e.g., Hadot 1995; parts of this originally appeared as Hadot 1987.

not in a position to investigate or discuss the theories put forward by non-skeptical philosophers (*PH* 2.1–11). And at the end of the long discussion in *Against the Ethicists* of why skeptics are better off, in terms of tranquility, than any other philosophers, he mentions and responds to the objections of "those who think that he [the skeptic] is reduced to inactivity or to inconsistency" (*M* 11.162–6). But it is also possible to understand the works much more generally as an exhibition of the viability of the skeptical outlook directed against those who would deny it.

However, while Sextus is clearly no stranger to polemic, there is also an expository character to his works, which suggests that he is not writing merely to defend skepticism against criticism. Again, this is most obvious in Book 1 of *PH*, which seems to be designed primarily to explain the character of skepticism to those previously unacquainted with it, not to rebut the objections of those who know about it but do not like it. But the same tone of explanation to outsiders can be detected in other places as well. For example, the discussion at the beginning of *Against the Logicians* of the various parts of philosophy, and of the appropriate order in which to treat them (*M* 7.2–24, also recalled at the beginning of *Against the Physicists*, *M* 9.1) looks as if it is designed to orient a reader unfamiliar with this material. More generally, his consistent practice of referring to the dogmatists in the third person, explaining what they say, suggests, at least rhetorically, that he intends to be addressing readers who would not identify themselves as dogmatists. Nor, for that matter, as skeptics, since he sometimes refers to the skeptics too in the third person; for example, "This is what the dogmatists' opposition is like; and the skeptics' way of meeting it is brief" (*M* 8.470).

If we agree to suppose that Sextus is writing in part for interested outsiders, it is a fair assumption that one purpose of this is to recommend skepticism to these readers, and perhaps to convert them into skeptics themselves. The closing sections of *PH* (3.280–1) speak of the skeptics as "philanthropic." Sextus actually says that they want to cure the *dogmatists* of their rashness, substituting suspension of judgment for the definite views these dogmatists used to hold (and so inducing tranquility in them, though Sextus does not mention that here). The passage has no parallel, and it is a little hard to take this seriously as his settled purpose – why should he care whether or not the dogmatists are "cured"? But the passage does open up the theme of a therapeutic purpose for the writings, and there is no reason why those who begin reading them neither as dogmatists nor as skeptics should not be among those Sextus would be happy to bring over to the skeptics' side.

Finally – and this is my third category of possible intended readers – we can understand the writings as in part directed to his fellow-skeptics, supplying them with a wealth of material in their quest to maintain suspension of judgment and tranquility – which is clearly an ongoing activity rather than a state to be attained once and for all. The fact that he often refers to the skeptics, especially in *PH*, as "we" is not in itself evidence for this; in explaining what "we" skeptics do, he may just as well be taken to be addressing outsiders as rallying the already converted. But the sheer length and detail of some of his expositions of opposing arguments makes it attractive to suppose that one of his intended audiences is other skeptics, who might make use of them in their own, more "advanced," activity of sustaining suspension of judgment.

As I say, it is quite possible that Sextus has all of these different categories of readers in mind, though perhaps different categories are uppermost in his mind at different times. But whichever of them he is writing for at any given time, a common thread is that his writings are designed to exemplify or express the suspension of judgment that he identifies as the route to tranquility. And this will often, perhaps even usually, be meant to carry with it an encouragement toward suspension of judgment in the reader. The next question is what this means for *how* he writes, or should write. The short answer is that he must write in such a way as not to seem to be promoting any definite conclusions. If he is arguing against a dogmatic position, for example, he must not give the impression that he thinks he is *winning* the argument; instead, he must generate a sense of stalemate. This is partly, of course, a matter of what arguments he employs; and Sextus does say at one point that he deliberately varies the strength of his arguments to match the strength of the dogmatic commitments gripping those on the other side (*PH* 3.281).[11] But it is also a matter of how these arguments, as well as those on the other side, are presented. Incidentally, there may be some overlap between methods of presentation that are appropriate given this purpose and those that would suit Sextus' stance as an inquirer. For he very deliberately contrasts the stance of an inquirer with those of people who think they know the answers. So he presents the inquirer, too, as the person who has

[11] The word used to describe the dogmatists' unhappy condition (*pathos*) is *oiêsis*, which can simply mean "opinion," or it can mean "conceit" – that is, having an excessively high opinion of oneself. However, in the latter case the basis for the conceit would be the belief that they had grasped the truth. Either way, then, the dogmatists are portrayed as people in the grip of definite beliefs, and the strength of their "affliction" is measured by the strength of their commitment to those beliefs. I thank Diego Machuca for drawing attention to an inaccuracy in my original framing of this issue.

come to no definite conclusions; even if ongoing inquiry and the deliberate manufacture of suspension of judgment are incompatible activities, they have this important point in common. Now, I have argued elsewhere that there are places where Sextus does in fact arrive at definite conclusions, and that this cannot be explained away as the production of one side of a pair of opposing arguments where the opposite side is understood; I have tried to explain this as a relic of an earlier phase of Pyrrhonism that was rather different in character from the one officially presented by Sextus.[12] But for present purposes I will ignore this complication, and concentrate on the ways Sextus writes when he is legitimately engaged in the activity that he officially presents as the skeptic's activity.

III

In addressing this issue, I have little to say about Sextus' literary style, because I do not think it has any particular lessons for us in this context. It is for the most part a clear and uncomplicated style, serviceable for the exposition of philosophical ideas but not usually drawing attention to itself; though agreeable enough, it does not make any special impact on the reader. It is generally simpler and more straightforward in *PH* than elsewhere, as befits the summary character of that work; compare, for example, the length and complexity of the sentences that open the major portions of *PH* and the opening sentences of *Against the Logicians*, *Against the Physicists*, *Against the Ethicists*, and the six-book work on the specialized sciences. I will single out just two cases. The transitions from logic to physics at the opening of *PH* 3 and the opening of *Against the Physicists* are both two-part sentences with *men* and *de*, and both allude to the fact that Sextus is going to concentrate on the most general issues in physics, since if these are put in doubt, it will follow that any more specific issues will also be put in doubt. But the sentence in *PH* 3 is six lines long, compared with eleven lines for the sentence in *Against the Physicists*; and the latter includes a lengthy parenthetical reference to the Academics as wasting their time dwelling on particulars, while the former has no mention of this. *Against the Physicists* continues with a simile from siege-craft, followed by further similes from hunting, and finally a sentence explicitly connecting the hunting similes with the procedure of arguing at the general level (*M* 9.2–3); the *PH* passage has none of this. The transition from physics to ethics in *PH* 3 is even simpler, with an unadorned two-line sentence

[12] See especially Bett 1997; Bett 2000a, chapter 4.

wrapping up the physical section and another two-line sentence opening the ethical section (*PH* 3.167–8). But while, in the other work, the last sentence of *Against the Physicists* makes the transition from physics to ethics in a two-part sentence of three lines, the first sentence of *Against the Ethicists* repeats the point in a somewhat more verbose manner, and then adds a grand claim, supported by a verse quotation from Timon, concerning the effect that this will have on our tranquility.

Once we get to the arguments, too, the writing itself tends to have a more stripped-down quality in *PH* than in the other works (it is not simply a question of the number of pages). However, the differences are more marked in some places than in others, and in any case do not alter the general description of Sextus' style that I offered a minute ago. Since the style is well adapted to the presentation of philosophical arguments, and is mostly used for precisely that, the point still remains that he needs devices to convey the fact that suspension of judgment, and not argumentative victory, is what he is aiming for.

One of these devices is well known, and is drawn attention to by Sextus himself. This is the repertoire of "skeptical phrases" that he employs to emphasize the fact that he is not making any definite assertions about the nature of things. Instead, as he says, these are "indicative of the skeptical disposition and of our feeling" (*PH* 1.187); that is, they report or express a state of mind rather than describing a state of affairs in the world, and the state of mind that they report or express is one in which opposing impressions or arguments seem equally convincing. This is obvious enough in the case of phrases that actually consist in a first-person utterance associated with a state of mind, such as "I suspend judgment," "I determine nothing," and "I do not apprehend" (*PH* 1.196, 197, 201); it is also obvious in the case of "perhaps" and "it is possible" (*PH* 1.194–5), which, as he says, are "revelatory" (*dêlôtikai*) of that same state of mind (labeled by him *aphasia*, "non-assertion") rather than stating that one is experiencing it. It is sometimes said that skeptical utterances quite generally are intended to *express* certain states of mind, as opposed to *saying that* one is in them, and thus are not really meant as assertions at all;[13] but this seems to be an overstatement even if we confine ourselves to the skeptical phrases, let alone the rest of Sextus' linguistic usage. Sextus' more detailed accounts of what "I suspend judgment" and "I determine nothing" amount to make clear that they are ways of declaring that one is in a certain state, not simply expressions of that state (*PH* 1.196, 197); the

[13] See especially Barnes 1997, 64–7. For examination of Barnes' view, see Corti 2009, chapter 6.

latter, for example, is said to amount to "I am affected in such a way as neither to posit dogmatically nor to do away with any of the things that fall under this investigation."[14] However, the distinction is one that Sextus himself may not have paid attention to. His way of spelling out the phrase "I do not apprehend" is that it "is revelatory of our own feeling, in terms of which the skeptic stands back for the present from positing any of the unclear things being investigated or doing away with them" (*PH* 1.201). This is quite naturally read as pointing toward an expression of a state of mind rather than an assertion to the effect that one is in such a state. Yet he immediately adds that this "is clear from what was said by us about the other phrases" – some of which, as I just observed, are *not* characterized as mere expressions of such states. It looks as if Sextus could have benefited from studying some J. L. Austin.

The important point, in any case, is that the skeptical phrases are ways of guarding against making definite assertions about *unclear* matters such as the dogmatists investigate. This is evident from Sextus' account of several phrases that have the outward form of assertions *not* concerning states of mind, namely, "everything is undetermined," "everything is inapprehensible," "to every argument there is an equal argument opposed," and also "no more," which is a shorthand for "this is no more the case than that." With respect to all of these, Sextus says that he does not use them to say anything about unclear matters, or about the nature of things, but, again, to report that he is in a state of equipoise between opposing alternatives. "This is no more the case than that," for example, is not (despite how it may sound) about the facts concerning the topic in question, but about the speaker's inability to make a determination concerning those facts (*PH* 1.190–191). Of course, that the speaker is unable to make a determination is itself a fact, but that is no problem; in other places (e.g., *PH* 1.19, 20) Sextus is quite explicit that the skeptics are prepared to state that things strike them in various ways.[15] The skeptical

[14] Barnes 1997, characterizing the position he takes Sextus to intend (and appealing to insights from Wittgenstein), says, "Adults, when they are in pain, may utter the sentence 'I am in pain' . . . ; they thereby *express* their pain, but they do not . . . *state that* they are in pain" (66). But this makes no sense; whatever else it is doing, of course "I am in pain," uttered by an adult in pain, states that the speaker is in pain (whereas "ouch" does not). I take the claim in the main text as equally unproblematic.

[15] Despite this, in two of the four cases just mentioned Sextus tells us about an alternative interpretation that either assimilates the phrase in question to, or transforms it into, some non-declarative form of words. "No more," he says, is understood by some as equivalent to "*Why* is this the case any more than that?" (*PH* 1.189), and some substitute an imperatival version of "to every argument there is an equal argument opposed": "*Let us* oppose to every argument an equal

phrases as a group are designed to protect them from making any assertions that go beyond the realm of how things appear to them.

In practice Sextus does not use the skeptical phrases as much as his account of them in *PH* 1 might lead one to expect. "No more" occurs not infrequently, and so do phrases with the general sense "up to now" or "so far" (*achri nun*, *mechri nun*, etc. – compare "for the present" in a quotation just above); the effect of these is to make clear that the speaker is not saying how things are in general, but only reporting his impressions based on his own limited experience. These do not appear among Sextus' actual examples of skeptical phrases, but they would seem to belong in the same company. Still, the skeptical phrases do not play a particularly prominent role in Sextus' writing. And this may lead us to wonder whether he has other techniques to keep the production of suspension of judgment at the forefront of readers' attention, and perhaps to help induce it in them.

I think that there are such techniques in Sextus, and I would sum up a number of them under the general term "variation." There are variations in the use of terms, variations in strategic decisions, and variations in the ways arguments are presented. In the past I have often accused Sextus of various kinds of inconsistency or incompetence in his procedures.[16] But on this occasion, without entirely renouncing that earlier attitude, I would like to explore the possibility that, by changing his story in one respect or another, he is deliberately trying to put the reader into a position where he or she does not know what to think – and thereby both minimizing the risk of seeming himself to hold definite positions and nudging the reader toward a suspensive state of mind. In the space available, I certainly cannot make a comprehensive case for the presence of this phenomenon; I will confine myself to presenting a few of what seem to me salient examples.

IV

Let us start with an example of variation in the use of a term. We saw earlier that Sextus seemed in one passage to resist being labeled a philosopher, and even to call into question the legitimacy of the term itself. But he does not always do this. In the very first chapter of *PH* he distinguishes, at the most general level, three main philosophies, of which skepticism is one (1.4). In the next chapter, on "the accounts of skepticism," he

argument" (*PH* 1.204). So apparently some skeptics did feel a greater need to avoid assertions, even about one's own states of mind, than Sextus himself generally does.

[16] See especially the commentary in Bett 1997; also, for example, the introduction to Bett 2005.

distinguishes a general and a specific account "of the skeptical philosophy," and promises a discussion distinguishing it "from neighboring philosophies" (1.5). And shortly afterward, in the very brief one-sentence chapter called "on the skeptic" (1.11), he identifies "the Pyrrhonian philosopher." Now, all these occurrences are just a few sections before the passage we examined earlier (1.18), where his stand-offish phrase "what is called philosophy" seems both to keep skepticism itself clear of the taint of being called a philosophy and to raise the question whether even those who profess to be philosophers are really entitled to lay claim to the term.[17] In addition, virtually the same stand-offish phrase appears even in the very next sentence after the reference to "neighboring philosophies"; Sextus says that the special account of skepticism is where "we argue against each part of what is called philosophy." The same kind of close juxtaposition of cases occurs at the beginning of Book 2. Sextus contrasts "the dogmatic . . . and the skeptical philosophy" (2.6), and speaks of the "suspensive philosophy" being introduced to replace dogmatism (2.9); yet in the very same passage he speaks twice of "what is called philosophy" (2.1, 12).[18]

The phrase appears elsewhere in *PH*, especially (as in the passage in which I first drew attention to it) where the three traditional parts of philosophy are themselves the topic (2.205, 3.1). Sometimes the term "called" is applied to the parts themselves, not to philosophy as such; in the transition from physics to ethics, Sextus remarks that enough has been said about "the part of philosophy called physics" (3.167). And in closing the ethical section, he actually combines both usages; the dogmatists vainly pride themselves, he says, "in what is said to be the ethical part of what is called philosophy" (3.278). The underlying thought is that both the term "philosophy" and the labels for its various parts, carry with them implications on which the dogmatists cannot deliver, and with which the skeptics would not want to involve themselves in the first place. Yet in other places he is comfortable using the terms "logic," "physics," and "ethics" as neutral

[17] See again note 4.

[18] Annas and Barnes 1994 consistently translate this phrase "what they call philosophy"; it is not clear whether the "they" is supposed to refer to the dogmatists or to people in general. But either way, this translation is misleading insofar as it can be read as implying that another, more acceptable usage of the term might be developed by a special group such as the skeptics themselves. There is no "they" in the Greek; the phrase is simply *hê kaloumenê* (or *legomenê*) *philosophia*, "what is called philosophy." This implies that what generally goes by the name of "philosophy" does not deserve the term. It does not imply not that something else, such as skepticism, does deserve it. And as we saw earlier (see note 4), Sextus' broader usage of the epithets *kaloumenos* and *legomenos* points strongly against this; when he uses phrases of the form *ho kaloumenos/legomenos X*, he is both questioning the dogmatists' employment of certain terminology and keeping himself at arm's length from it.

designations of subject matter; and, as we have seen, in a number of places he is comfortable applying the term "philosophy" to skepticism itself. The other works besides *PH* do not show anything like as bald a contrast. Outside *PH*, the word "called" appears in connection with philosophy only once, where Sextus reports on the young Epicurus being told by his teacher about "those who are called Philosophers" (*M* 10.19); clearly this is not a matter of suspicion, but of the teaching of a term. And in *Against the Logicians*, *Physicists*, and *Ethicists* Sextus is happy to use the term "philosophy" without qualification to refer the various parts of the subject (e.g., *M* 7.1, 9.1, 11.1) and to characterize the skeptics, as well as the dogmatists, as philosophers (*M* 7.30, 8.191). Yet even here, there is a hint of the same kind of critical usage as we have seen in *PH*. In *Against the Ethicists*, explaining why the dogmatist is subject to so much more trouble than the skeptic, he several times uses "the philosopher" as shorthand for "the dogmatic philosopher" (*M* 11.135, 136, 138), making it sound as if skeptics would *not* count as philosophers.

Clearly, though, it is *PH* that exhibits most starkly the phenomenon I am describing. Sextus both appropriates and repudiates the term "philosophy," often in very close proximity. One might accuse him of gross negligence. But given the close proximity, it is difficult to believe that he was not aware of this striking variation in usage, and this forces us to consider the possibility that it is a deliberate strategy on his part. But if so, with what purpose? The answer that most naturally comes to mind is that Sextus is pushing toward a kind of suspension of judgment about the nature of philosophy itself. Is it, by definition, the kind of enterprise in which secure and definite results are achieved – in which case a skeptic might well question whether any such thing exists? Or does the term encompass any serious and sustained discussion, from whatever point of view, of a certain range of subject matter – in which case there would be no difficulty in speaking of the "Pyrrhonist philosopher"? There is no obvious answer to these questions. One might, of course, stipulate a sense, or multiple senses, of "philosopher" such that they are resolved. And Sextus himself says that he is not interested in fighting about terms (*PH* 1.207). But in this case he does not attempt to resolve the ambiguity – as he does, for example, on the question of whether the skeptic does physics; rather, he lets the competing intuitions about what philosophy is remain in play. The result is to make the skeptic's position vis-à-vis philosophy, and the appropriate aspirations of philosophy itself, elusive questions; and this in turn can be seen as a sort of meta-level instance of his general project of subverting the reader's confidence.

There is also an elusiveness concerning his relation to ordinary life. Although the issue here is not one of competing uses of a term, the effect is not entirely dissimilar. Sometimes Sextus claims to be in tune with everyday attitudes and, in this sense, to be "on the side of ordinary life" against the abstractions and theorizing of the dogmatists. An obvious example is his treatment of signs, that is, means of inferring from the observed to the unobserved. He is happy to accept the experience-based signs of everyday life, such as (observed) smoke as a sign of (unobserved) fire – what he calls "recollective" (*hupomnêstika*) signs – and concentrates his critique on the sort of sign (the *endeiktikon*, "indicative" sign) that the dogmatists think can lead them to the underlying nature of things; it is these, he claims, that are unconnected with and even subversive of common sense (*PH* 2.102, *M* 8.156–8). Similarly, in his treatment of the specialized sciences he several times says that he has no dispute with skills employed in the course of ordinary life, such as the ability to read and write (*M* 1.49), the ability to predict the weather from looking at the sky (*M* 5.2), or the ability to play a musical instrument well (*M* 6.1–3); everyone agrees that these are worthwhile and useful accomplishments. What he is against, broadly speaking, is the attempt to reach a theoretical understanding of the nature of the objects dealt with in these everyday skills – in these cases, the nature of language, of celestial movements, or of sound. Again, in describing the skeptic's adherence to laws and customs, Sextus says that the skeptics "accept piety as good and impiety as bad, in terms of ordinary life" (*biôtikôs*, *PH* 1.24). It is not entirely clear what this amounts to; but it is clearly designed to mark a contrast between an everyday engagement with certain concepts or practices, which he endorses, and a philosophical theorizing about them, which he avoids. This is more explicit in a passage of *Against the Ethicists*, where he says that "the skeptic does not live in accordance with philosophical reasoning . . ., but in accordance with non-philosophical practice he is able to choose some things and avoid others" (*M* 11.165, which is followed immediately by another reference to laws and customs as guiding his choices). And in other places religion is cited as a case where the skeptic adheres to everyday practices (including linguistic practices) and avoids any rash philosophizing (*PH* 3.2, *M* 9.49).

But Sextus does not uniformly side with ordinary life. Immediately after saying in *Against the Physicists* that the skeptic's religious practice and utterance follow his native laws and customs, he says that, alongside most of the dogmatists, "the common preconception of ordinary life" says that the divine exists (*M* 9.50) – whereas some thinkers say it does not, and the

skeptics suspend judgment. Here, then, ordinary attitudes are enlisted on one side of a set of opposing arguments and impressions; they belong alongside one group of philosophical positions and in a quite different camp from the skeptics themselves. The same point occurs in *PH*, where "the many" are said to hold that there are gods (3.218); I take it that "the many" (*hoi polloi*) includes ordinary people, even if some philosophers may belong under this heading as well. And just below, a further disagreement is cited, among those "in ordinary life" who hold that there are gods, concerning the number of these gods (3.219). All these are matters about which the skeptic is later said to suspend judgment (3.235). In the case of motion, too, an everyday opinion is included on *one side* of a controversy on which Sextus is steering us toward suspension of judgment; both in *PH* and in *Against the Physicists* we are told that "ordinary life" (*bios*) says that there is motion (*PH* 3.65, *M* 10.45). This is so despite the fact that, shortly before one of these passages, he allowed that there was a loose, everyday sense of "place" to which he had no objection (*M* 10.15 – cf. *PH* 3.119, although this is less close, and the order is different), and there is an obvious connection between the concepts of place and motion (*M* 10.36). As for the subject of good and bad, Sextus explicitly says that "ordinary people" (*idiôtai*) believe that things are good or bad by nature; this is precisely the error that leads them, as well as the dogmatists, into mental turmoil, the turmoil from which the skeptic is free because of lacking this belief.

This last case may be something of an exception. For it is at least possible to see this as a case where Sextus is ascribing to ordinary people a certain quasi-philosophical *interpretation* of the nature of their own ethical thought and discourse, rather than simply characterizing that thought and discourse. And in this case, of course, there need be no conflict; it would be possible for the skeptic to steer clear of the quasi-philosophical interpretation, while nonetheless engaging in the everyday ethical thought and discourse that is its subject matter. But the other cases mentioned in the previous paragraph clearly cannot be parsed in this manner. That there is motion, stated baldly and without elaboration, is an ordinary view, not a reflective interpretation of an ordinary view; indeed, this is precisely Sextus' point in stating that this is what *bios* says – just as, in a passage cited a little earlier, *biôtikôs*, "in terms of ordinary life" (*PH* 1.24), pointed to a non-reflective adoption of certain practices and forms of speech, by contrast with the kinds of things philosophers say. The same is true of ordinary people's ideas about gods; the phrase "the common preconception of ordinary life" (*M* 9.50) is designed to *contrast* ordinary people's view that there are gods with the philosophical view that

there are gods, not to assimilate the first to the second. Yet sometimes, as in the passage in which that phrase appears, Sextus groups the ordinary view and the philosophical view together on one side of an opposition about which he himself suspends judgment, whereas at other times he claims to be "following *bios*" and, in his own person, to "say that there are gods" (*PH* 3.2).

We have, then, two apparently very different attitudes toward the skeptics' relation to everyday views and practices. And there is at least one place (*M* 9.49, 50) where, as in the case of the skeptics' relation to philosophy, the two contrasting attitudes are exhibited in startlingly close proximity. Now, as I suggested in the case of philosophy, it may be possible to sort through these apparent differences and extract a consistent stance concerning how or to what extent the skeptic is in tune with the everyday. This is a very complicated question, and my sense is that it would be easier to find consistency in some cases than in others. But my point here is that Sextus himself seems to make no effort at all to clarify the issue. Again, this at least raises the suspicion that Sextus is deliberately playing with his readers, encouraging them to ponder how far the skeptic can be considered a normal person, and how far ordinary life should be seen as the polar opposite of philosophical reflection. As in the previous case, there are no simple answers; and the effect may be to drive us toward yet another form of suspension of judgment.

My final example of what I am calling "variation" concerns the way Sextus sets up his "oppositions." Here it is not a matter of seemingly inconsistent approaches, but of a constantly changing way of organizing his material.[19] If his procedure is, as he says, to assemble these oppositions, one might expect that roughly equal attention and space would be given to each side of the oppositions. Now sometimes this does happen. In the section on God in *Against the Physicists* there are extended summaries, of roughly equal length, of arguments for and against the existence of gods (*M* 9.60–137, 137–90). Again, almost the entire first book of *Against the Logicians* (*M* 7.25–445) is devoted to the topic of the criterion of truth, and it contains lengthy sections both of positive arguments for various sorts of criteria and of arguments against the existence of any criterion.

[19] This third example is therefore of a rather different character from the first two, and arguably more effective. For one might well think that an inconsistency, real or apparent, in terminology or in attitude would simply annoy the reader, which could hardly be expected to be helpful either in displaying the skeptical outlook or in attracting the reader toward it. So if Sextus is indeed doing what I have suggested in the last few pages (as opposed to being merely incompetent), he is at least assuming a relatively high level of both subtlety and indulgence on the part of his readers.

And the section on number in the second book of *Against the Physicists* includes an exposition, going into considerable detail, of Pythagorean theory about the nature and significance of number (*M* 10.248–84), followed by counter-arguments (284–309).

But much more often it is the negative arguments, most of them apparently devised by the skeptics themselves, that dominate the discussion. Generally this is explained in one of two ways. Either the dogmatists' arguments on the other side, and their relative plausibility, are taken for granted (e.g., *PH* 2.79, 192, *M* 8.159–60, 298 – or *M* 9.195–267, where both sides are presented, but the dogmatists' side much more briefly) or the non-skeptical side is said to be supplied by plain experience rather than by any positive philosophical argument (*PH* 3.81, 135, *M* 10.168). In practice, these two categories are sometimes run together, when the dogmatists' arguments for the existence of something are said to consist in the evidence of plain experience; this is true of the discussion of motion and place in *PH* 3 (66, 120), and essentially the same thing is going on the same book's discussion of cause (*PH* 3.17–18). In one place Sextus explains that the skeptic is naturally going to concentrate on the more counter-intuitive side of the opposition – this is the only way to get equality in the strength of the opposing impressions (*M* 7.443); and this will generally be a view to the effect that some widely recognized phenomenon does not exist. So the prevalence of negative arguments in the text is actually instrumental to the production of suspension of judgment; and Sextus frequently reminds us that this is what he is after.

But the matter is often more complicated than this. Even in the cases where there is extended argument on either side of a topic, we do not always get a pure exposition of each side in order. In the case of the criterion of truth in *Against the Logicians*, Sextus offers a lengthy series of arguments against the criterion (*M* 7.261–445). But the discussion that precedes it is not exactly a set of arguments for the criterion. Rather, it is a survey of all the previous positions that Sextus understands as having to do with the criterion; this contains both positions that (in his view) favor the existence of a certain criterion and positions that are against any criterion. The positive views predominate, but the negative ones are by no means insignificant. Sextus actually sums up the first part of the discussion by saying that "since . . . the entire disagreement about the criterion now lies in view" (*M* 7.261), it is time to move to counter-arguments. The survey that has preceded seems, then, to be presented simultaneously as one side of a disagreement (the other side of which is to follow) and as a disagreement in itself. The result is to put the structure of the discussion a little out

of focus, and to raise some uncertainty in the reader as to what exactly is going on at any given time.

Conversely, in the course of the extensive arguments against motion in *Against the Physicists*, Sextus inserts a number of arguments from Diodorus Cronus (*M* 10.85–120). It looks at first as if he is enlisting Diodorus to help his own case, and for the most part this is indeed what is going on. But he also inserts arguments that others have offered *against* Diodorus, as well as some of Diodorus' responses. And here his verdicts are mixed; while allowing that some of Diodorus' replies are effective, he accuses several of being sophistical (*M* 10.99, 102, 112–18). The effect is to introduce a measure of doubt about the arguments against motion even in the course of explicating them, despite the fact that it is ordinary experience alone that is eventually said to balance the negative arguments (*M* 10.168). Again Sextus is muddying the waters, making his exposition a little less systematic than one might have expected. And the same is true, of course, of the many occasions where dogmatic objections to skeptical arguments appear in the course of the presentation of those arguments, together with the skeptics' replies to them; for example, this is how the discussion of signs, both in *PH* and in *Against the Logicians*, draw to a close (*PH* 2.130–3, *M* 8.275–97). In *PH* this section is actually introduced as an exposition of the positive arguments in favor of the existence of signs, with a view to reaching "equal strength" in the opposing positions (2.130) – even though it sounded at the outset as if negative arguments were all we were going to get (2.103). But then the promise of a positive exposition is immediately broken, when a positive argument is juxtaposed with a negative one (2.132–3).

Although I have just given an example from *PH*, it is my impression that such cases, where the reader's expectations as to what Sextus is up to are subverted, are more common in *Against the Logicians*, *Physicists*, and *Ethicists* (*M* 7–11) than in *PH*. (I leave aside for this purpose the work on the specialized sciences (*M* 1–6), which poses a number of distinctive problems.) No doubt this is due in part to the much greater length and much more discursive character of this work.[20] Again, one might accuse

[20] Sextus himself appears to refer to the longer work in its entirety by the title *Skeptika Hupomnêmata* (*M* 1.29 [26], 2.106, 6.52); this also seems to be supported by the manuscripts of the two books *Against the Physicists* and the single book *Against the Ethicists*, which label each of these three books as a numbered book of Sextus' *Skeptika*, or of his *Hupomnêmata*. Now, one standard meaning of *hupomnêmata* is "notes" or "memoranda"; if this is what Sextus intends by the term, then a rambling, unsystematic character for the work is suggested even by the title. However, *hupomnêma* also seems to be used in the more formal sense of "treatise," so one cannot build too much on this. I owe these observations about the term to Teun Teilemann; LSJ gives a good sample of the range of uses.

Sextus of simple incompetence in these cases, and I would not reject that explanation outright; no doubt it would be easier for him, in a longer work, to lose track of what he was doing. But it is also worth considering the possibility that he sees a purpose in *not* being too systematic in his exposition, regarding the reversal of expectations concerning the layout of the discussion as itself one more means to dislodge the reader from entrenched positions. I do not see any way to prove that this is his intention. But it is certainly more charitable to propose that he wants the reader not always to know what he is doing than that he himself does not always know what he is doing. And I do think we see instances in Sextus of a kind of strategic trickery; for example, after arguing that the skeptics do not reject appearances – contrary to a mistaken critique, as noted earlier – he immediately invents a reason why it would nicely serve an anti-dogmatic purpose even if they did (*PH* 1.19–20). The strategies that I have attributed to him under the heading of "variation" seem to me to be not unlike this in spirit.

Let me close with one more, perhaps irresponsible suggestion. I said earlier that the skeptic's stance as an "inquirer" was incompatible with the single-minded activity of generating opposing arguments with a view to suspension of judgment; in the first case one is searching for the truth, but in the second one has given up on that search. Yet to all appearances, Sextus does present himself in both these ways. Is this yet another piece of elusiveness on his part, in which he is making it systematically ambiguous what skepticism itself is – or maybe, what inquiry is? Perhaps this attributes to Sextus an implausibly high level of sophistication, or an anachronistically postmodern sensibility. But an ambiguity about this would be by no means entirely unrelated to the ambiguities I was pointing to earlier, about skepticism's relation to philosophy and to ordinary life. At any rate, without being able to explore it further here, I leave you with that possibility.[21]

[21] An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the 3rd International Meeting on Skepticism and 13th Colóquio Nacional sobre Ceticismo, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, August 2010, and at the 3rd Kongress der Gesellschaft für antike Philosophie (Argument und literarische Form in antiker Philosophie), Würzburg, Germany, September–October 2010. I thank the organizers of both conferences (Waldomiro Silva Filho and Plinio Smith in Brazil, Michael Erler in Germany) for inviting me, and the audiences at both venues for their comments, especially Lorenzo Corti and Diego Machuca in Salvador, Gábor Betegh, Charles Brittain, Jörn Müller, and Teun Tielemann in Würzburg; I have learned a good deal from them, and the chapter is, I hope, improved as a result.

CHAPTER 2

Why Care Whether Skepticism Is Different from Other Philosophies?

I

From at least the Hellenistic period on, ancient Greek philosophical schools routinely and explicitly appealed to predecessors as inspiration for their ideas. For the skeptical Academics of this period to appeal to Plato and Socrates was an obvious move given that Plato founded the school to which they belonged; but the Stoics also appealed to Socrates, and to some extent Plato, even while disagreeing sharply with Plato on a number of issues.[1] A Stoic debt to Heraclitus is also apparent; while explicit acknowledgment of this by the Stoics themselves is hard to find in the surviving testimonies, we know that the early Stoics Cleanthes and Sphaerus both wrote books about Heraclitus (DL 7.174, 177), which at least suggests an awareness of, and a willingness to admit, common ground. The Epicureans tended to emphasize their own originality to a greater extent;[2] but both Epicurus himself and Lucretius singled out Democritus as an important forerunner (Epicurus *On Nature* 34.30 = LS20C13–14; Lucretius 3.371, 5.622). By the time we get to later antiquity, revived movements of Platonism and Aristotelianism take hold, to which eventually almost all philosophers are attached. And at this point we are far beyond a mere selective acknowledgment of influence; one's whole outlook is defined by one's perceived relation to Plato or Aristotle (or both, for these two movements are by no means entirely distinct[3]).[4]

[1] For both the Academics and the Stoics, see the classic Long 1988.

[2] See especially Sextus, *M* 1.3, where Epicurus is reported as repudiating his own teacher Nausiphanes and claiming to be self-taught.

[3] On this see Tuominen 2009, chapter 1.

[4] On the increasing appeal in the philosophy of the Greco-Roman world to the authority of a founder figure – who may or may not have been an actual member of the school in question – see Sedley 1997. Also relevant in this context is the thesis of Boys-Stones 2001, that philosophy in the early centuries AD came to be understood as the project of retrieving an ancient wisdom – one that Plato, in particular, was regarded as having already unearthed.

All this makes it quite noteworthy that Sextus Empiricus, who seems to have lived at a time when this revived Platonism and Aristotelianism were well under way,[5] takes considerable pains to show that Pyrrhonism is *different* from other philosophies. He is not even especially eager to admit debts to earlier Pyrrhonists. Pyrrho himself is rarely mentioned in Sextus' pages, and his one explicit remark about how Pyrrho gave his name to the Pyrrhonist tradition is notably stand-offish; he simply says, "Pyrrho appears to us to have approached skepticism in an more full-bodied fashion and more manifestly than those before him" (*PH* 1.7).[6] Aenesidemus, the founder of the later Pyrrhonist movement to which Sextus himself belonged, also receives comparatively few mentions – seventeen in a total of fourteen surviving books – and several of these are in contexts involving Aenesidemus' interest in or association with the ideas of Heraclitus (a topic to which we shall return), rather than his purely skeptical credentials. Sextus regularly uses phrases such as "we skeptics" – he is not trying to deny being part of a movement – but he is remarkably reticent about acknowledging named predecessors. But the most explicit indication of his bucking the trend of his own time, where situating oneself in the tradition of some earlier authority became more and more important for philosophers, is the final segment of the first book of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (*PH* 1.209–41); here Sextus discusses several other philosophies, all of them predating Pyrrhonism, and argues that Pyrrhonism is distinct from all of them. My aim in this chapter is to try to shed some light on Sextus' motivations in this passage, and more generally on why he seems so eager not to allow his own outlook to be assimilated to those of others before him.

There are six chapters on these other philosophies: on Heraclitus, Democritus, the Cyrenaics, Protagoras, the Academy – with several subdivisions, and including a digression on Xenophanes – and the Empiric

[5] Sextus is generally placed in the second century AD. But Jouanna 2009 has argued powerfully for dating him a little later, at the beginning of the third century, primarily on the basis of Galen's silence about him. This is not a new argument, but Jouanna makes clear how unlikely it is that Galen would not have referred to Sextus had they been contemporaries. However, my point in the main text applies even if this is not correct.

[6] One might suggest that this is simply a case of Sextus being pedantically Pyrrhonian, avoiding any definite claims about what Pyrrho thought. But in general Sextus has no trouble giving detailed accounts – including, sometimes, variant accounts between which he does not choose – of what other philosophers said or thought. It is clear from Diogenes Laertius' life of Pyrrho that accounts of Pyrrho's sayings and behavior were available, should Sextus have wished to appeal to them. Here, however, he is offering the absolute minimum to explain the label "Pyrrhonian," which reads like a deliberate refusal to appeal to Pyrrho as a predecessor in the sort of way one might expect, given the examples in the previous paragraph.

school of medicine. Sextus calls them "nearby" (*parakeimenai*) philosophies and says that he is going to explain the "distinction" (*diakrisis*) between each of them and skepticism (*PH* 1.5, 209). Since he is generally so emphatic about the "distinction," one might have expected him to challenge the characterization of these philosophies as "nearby," but he does not do so. The reason, I take it, is that this or related terms were already in use by others as ways of classifying them. Sextus might be uncomfortable with the claim of similarity embedded in the label "nearby"; but he is prepared to use the word in a neutral fashion as a commonly understood means of referring to them.

That some people did think of a number of other ideas, both philosophical and otherwise, as akin to skepticism, and as anticipating it in important respects, seems clear from a passage of Diogenes Laertius' life of Pyrrho (9.71–3), where a considerable number of thinkers and poets are alleged to have been skeptics before their time.[7] The list begins and ends with Homer, but it includes three of the philosophers considered in the passage of Sextus to which I have referred: Xenophanes, Democritus, and Heraclitus (9.72–3). It is also worth noting that all three of these – together with Zeno of Elea, also named by Diogenes as a proto-skeptic (9.72) – appear as the subjects of lives earlier in Diogenes' book 9, which ends with the connected lives of Pyrrho and Timon. And another figure treated in book 9 is Protagoras, who also appears in Sextus' group of "nearby" philosophers, though not in Diogenes' own passage explicitly naming skeptical predecessors. Although the ordering of the lives in Diogenes is in large part dictated by actual or supposed teacher–pupil "successions" of philosophers, and we have other records of such "successions" involving many of the philosophers who appear in his book 9,[8] he is not entirely bound by these pre-existing sequences, and it is not unreasonable to think that judgments of philosophical closeness may have played a role in his choices of who to include where; in this case the looming figure of Pyrrho, whose life is by far the longest in book 9, may had something to do with who else was placed leading up to him.[9] Besides, the "successions" themselves often relied on judgments of this sort, rather than on any solid biographical data; Diogenes' claim in this book that Parmenides was a

[7] For an excellent discussion of this passage, see Warren 2015.

[8] Clement, *Strom.* 1.14.64, 2–4; Eusebius, *Praep. evang.* 14.17.10; pseudo-Galen, *Hist. philos.* 3 (p.601 Diels).

[9] I have discussed this further in Bett 2015a, section I.

pupil of Xenophanes (9.21), which is repeated in numerous other sources,[10] is a good example.

Thus we have good reason to think that a number of philosophers and other authors were recognized in certain circles as having been to some degree forerunners of Pyrrhonist skepticism, and that Sextus is responding to this perception by arguing, for a group of these alleged forerunners that seem to him most significant, that he and his fellow Pyrrhonists are in fact quite distinct from them.[11] Except in one case, Aenesidemus' claim of a link between Pyrrhonism and Heraclitus (*PH* 1.210), Sextus does not say who he is disagreeing with, attributing the claims of similarity to an unnamed *tines*, "some" (*PH* 1.215, 220, 236) or remarking that the similarity "is said" (*legetai*, *PH* 1.213) or "is thought" (*dokei*, *PH* 1.217) to obtain. But the evidence from Diogenes makes clear that views of the kind he is opposing had some currency. There is additional evidence for this in the case of the Academics, whom Diogenes does not mention in this context (or indeed anywhere in book 9); but I will leave aside the Academics until we get to Sextus' treatment of them (Section III).

It would be interesting to know whether such views (beyond the case of Aenesidemus and Heraclitus, and again, ignoring for now the case of the Academics) were held by Pyrrhonists – in which case Sextus would be engaging in a dispute internal to the tradition – or whether they came from others: either from those hostile to the skeptics or from doxographers, for whom the classification of philosophies was a major concern, but who were not necessarily attached to any one of them. Diogenes does not say whose idea it was that all the figures he mentions, in the passage I referred to, were proto-skeptics. But can we tell whether or not this idea originated with the skeptics themselves? Although some have thought so, I am not convinced that we can.

Annas and Barnes say that Diogenes ascribes the claim of similarity (in the case of Democritus, but the same would apply at least to several others) to the skeptics themselves.[12] But the entire passage is introduced non-committally by "some [*enioi*] say that Homer began this school"

[10] E.g., Aristotle, *Met.* 986b21–2 (Aristotle reports this as an opinion held, without himself offering a verdict on it); also the passages cited in note 8 above.

[11] There is of course no necessary opposition between saying that philosopher A was to some degree a forerunner of philosopher B and saying that their philosophies are not the same; hence one might wonder why, with a little nuance, Sextus might not accept certain views about skeptical predecessors of the kind reported in Diogenes. However, as we shall see, Sextus is notably resistant even to claims of similarity between skepticism and other philosophies; as he himself frames the issue, his approach really is in *conflict* with the one in Diogenes.

[12] Annas and Barnes 1994, 54, n. 221.

(9.71), and the later "according to them" (*kat'autous*, 9.72), which accompanies the mention of Democritus and others, simply refers back to this "some people"; there is no indication here as to whether these are skeptics or not. Katja Vogt accepts this point, but offers three reasons for thinking that it is in fact the skeptics themselves who are responsible for the comparisons.[13] The first is that Sextus' account of the distinctness of skepticism refers only to philosophers and medical theorists, whereas Diogenes' passage on the similarities has a good many references to poetry. Since Sextus does not address the poetic quotations, he must not see them as hostile or in need of response, which suggests that they originated in his own school. The second is that Diogenes does address the issue of anti-skeptical challenges, and the skeptic's replies to them, at another place in the life of Pyrrho (9.102–8); but that passage has no clear connection with the passage alleging similarities (even though Democritus appears in both), which suggests that he does not view the latter passage as anti-skeptical in import. The third is that Diogenes explicitly tells us, shortly before the passage about the similarities, that Pyrrho admired Homer (9.67), who has pride of place in the latter passage as the first proto-skeptic (9.71); we might add that he also tells us in the same place that Pyrrho admired Democritus. And this points toward Pyrrho and his early associates having devised the list of poetic and philosophical proto-skeptics.

Although the scenario that Vogt sketches is entirely possible, none of these points seems to me decisive. On the first, Sextus frequently reminds us that *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* is what its title suggests – a brief overview of the skeptical outlook; hence it would make perfect sense for him to focus only on the claims of similarity that seemed to him most important. And it would not be surprising, given his general orientation, if these centered around philosophical or theoretical concerns rather than poetic remarks of a vaguely skeptical air. Besides, if the poetic parallels originated in the doxographical tradition, Sextus need not have seen them as hostile or deserving of rebuttal; from the fact that they were not devised by the skeptics themselves, it would not follow that he would have to view them as critical in spirit. On the second point, the fact that Diogenes addresses anti-skeptical challenges elsewhere does not provide reason for thinking that the similarities were the skeptics' own invention. Diogenes is not always the most organized of writers, and even if the claimed similarities were devised by the skeptics' opponents, there would be no great surprise

[13] Vogt 2015, section 2(i).

in their appearing in another part of the life of Pyrrho. In addition, again, there is a further option besides their being of skeptical or anti-skeptical origin; they could have been devised by doxographers who, at least as such, might be entirely neutral as between the skeptics and their opponents. In this case there would be no reason to expect this material to be linked with the anti-skeptical challenges. And on the third point, Pyrrho's reported admiration for Homer and Democritus would be just as likely to inspire a doxographer as a skeptic to claim similarities between the two of them and skepticism.

Galen does say that "even the Pyrrhonists trace back their school to most ancient men" (*In Hipp. De med. off.* 18b.658.10–12K). But this is a remark in passing and he offers no details. It has been suggested that there is reason to attribute to Aenesidemus a concern with finding precursors for his own skeptical position.[14] But apart from the obvious case of Pyrrho himself, and the special case of Heraclitus noted above, the evidence for this is tenuous. It depends on the interesting, but inevitably speculative, claim that Aenesidemus is the source of at least part of Sextus' catalog of positions for and against the existence of a criterion of truth in the first book of *Against the Logicians* (*M* 7.46–260) – specifically, the part dealing with the deniers of any criterion, which comes first (*M* 7.48–88).[15] But even if we accept this claim, the conclusion does not follow. For, as Sextus makes clear (*M* 7.46), the list of deniers of the criterion is one side of an opposition among *dogmatic* philosophers concerning the criterion of truth; we are not supposed to identify the skeptics with either side of this opposition. Admittedly, it is possible that Aenesidemus' own position was different; there is reason to think that his version of Pyrrhonism was more focused than Sextus' on denying the existence of various entities, rather than suspending judgment about their existence,[16] and indeed there may even be some traces of this earlier position in *Against the Logicians* itself (*M* 7.26, *M* 8.1).[17] But this still does not entitle us to infer that the

[14] Warren 2015, n. 18 and accompanying text. [15] For this claim, see Sedley 1992, 25–7.

[16] For example, Photius' summary of Aenesidemus' *Pyrrhonist Discourses* tells us that Aenesidemus denied the existence of signs, causes, and ethical ends (*Bibl.* 170a12–14, 18–19, 30–5). I argue for this way of interpreting Aenesidemus in Bett 2000a, chapter 4.

[17] As noted by Sedley 1992, 26 n. 11. Sedley also points out that the manuscripts actually contain the sentence "and among these were also the skeptics" at the end of the list of deniers of the criterion (*M* 7.48). Mutschmann deletes this as contrary to Sextus' purpose, but Sedley wonders whether it should have been retained. Although I have long been suspicious of corrections to the manuscripts of Sextus that are designed to assimilate all his writings to the Pyrrhonism of *PH*, in this case I side with Mutschmann. Again, Sextus has just said that this is an opposition among dogmatists. In addition, the reference to the skeptics has no connection with the following discussion, which is

list of deniers of the criterion was conceived by Aenesidemus as a list of skeptical predecessors. For it is clear from the Ten Modes, which derive from Aenesidemus (*M* 7.345), that his version of Pyrrhonism also had a large place for assembling oppositions; it is just as likely in this case that he, like Sextus, was interested in laying out both sides of the opposition as that he simply wanted to identify with the negative side.

On this question, then, it seems to me that a properly skeptical suspension of judgment is appropriate. It is quite possible that the Pyrrhonists themselves are behind the passage of Diogenes listing skeptical predecessors, and that Sextus, in arguing that Pyrrhonism is distinct from a number of other philosophies, is going against a view that was current in his own tradition. But this is not the only possibility. I doubt that anti-skeptics are behind it, because the thrust of the whole passage is to show that the earlier philosophers and poets say things that are skeptical in tone; if it was devised with anti-skeptical intent, one would expect the similarities to be exploited with the aim of showing that the Pyrrhonists were not really skeptical at all, or that they are inconsistent in their skepticism. We cannot be sure that such anti-skeptical strategies were not developed, or that they were not part of what Sextus had in mind in arguing for the distinctness of skepticism; but the Diogenes passage itself does not provide evidence that they were. However, this still leaves the possibility that the Diogenes passage derives from the taxonomic activities of doxographers who were not associated either with the skeptics or with their opponents.

If skeptics were the source, their aim was presumably similar to one of the main aims of dogmatists who appealed to predecessors: to show that their outlook was respectable and possessed of an illustrious pedigree. And if this is the case, Sextus' response must be driven by the thought that pedigree is less important than purity; the association with earlier philosophers, whatever the intentions of those who made it, runs the risk of having the skeptics being considered inconsistent or dogmatic. Avoiding this risk must also be central to his purpose if he is responding to a perception created by the doxographers' classification of philosophies, or for that matter to a critique by anti-skeptics (although in these cases we would have to imagine somewhat different subtexts to his remarks). I shall expand on this point and make it more precise in Section IV, after we have looked at the text in some detail.

otherwise precisely previewed by the order of the philosophers mentioned. And the remark itself has the feel of a tacked-on addition, which is typical of glosses that have found their way into a text.

II

In any case, it is clear that there *were* views current to the effect that skepticism was similar to or identical with numerous other philosophies, as well as ideas expressed in various poets. Sextus either does not know or does not care about the poetic comparisons, but he sees the connections made with a number of other philosophies as important enough to refute. How does he go about this?

In general terms, the answer is very simple: in each case Sextus draws attention to definite conclusions that the philosophy being compared with skepticism is prepared to assert, while emphasizing that in contrast the skeptic suspends judgment. In some cases the other philosophy is said (in the view of those whom Sextus is opposing) to be "the same" as skepticism (*PH* 1.215, 220, 236), while in others it is said to "have a commonality" (*echein koinônian*) with skepticism (*PH* 1.213, 217), which sounds like a weaker claim. It is not immediately obvious whether there is any significance to this difference. If having a "commonality" merely indicates a degree of common ground, one might think that Sextus could accept this while still maintaining that skepticism differs crucially because it, unlike the other philosophy, suspends judgment. Sextus does not explicitly address this possibility one way or the other, but his responses in these cases seem just as relentlessly focused on skepticism's distinctness as in those where the other philosophy is said to be "the same" as skepticism. And in fact, I shall suggest that there is reason to think, in at least one case, that he would be just as unwilling to accept claims of commonality as claims of identity. This only reinforces the impression with which I began, namely, that Sextus is strikingly at odds with a standard philosophical approach in his time. It also puts into sharper focus the question of his purposes in this part of the work.

The first allegedly "nearby" philosophy considered is that of Heraclitus (*PH* 1.210–12). This is introduced with neither a claim of "commonality" nor one of identity; having said that the philosophy of Heraclitus will be the first to be considered (*PH* 1.209), Sextus launches immediately into his response, saying "that this is different from our approach is clear" (*PH* 1.210). As we saw, Heraclitus was among those considered proto-skeptics by whoever are behind the list in Diogenes Laertius (9.73). But while some of what Sextus says in this chapter would no doubt serve to address their view, his explicit target is just one person – his own Pyrrhonist predecessor, Aenesidemus – and for a very specific reason. Aenesidemus is said to have held that skepticism is a route (*hodon*) to the Heraclitean philosophy,

because the idea that opposites appear to apply to the same thing "precedes" (*proêgêtai*) the idea that they actually do apply to the same thing; the skeptics adhere to the first idea and Heraclitus to the second, and the one can lead to the other.

There is room for considerable debate about what exactly Aenesidemus was suggesting.[18] But one thing is clear. To say that skepticism is a route to the philosophy of Heraclitus does not imply that one wishes to follow that route oneself; thus we do not need to suppose that Aenesidemus became or intended to become a Heraclitean (though this has sometimes been supposed).[19] The term *proêgêtai*, "precedes," seems to suggest that acceptance of the appearance of opposites applying to the same thing is somehow a *precondition* of coming to accept their reality;[20] but this still does not mean that Aenesidemus himself wanted to move from the first step to the second – a necessary condition is not the same as a sufficient condition. Nonetheless, it does look as if Aenesidemus saw a significant point of contact between skepticism and Heracliteanism – a "commonality," to use the term Sextus himself uses in some other cases; and the same is suggested by a repeated phrase elsewhere in Sextus, *Ainêsidêmos kata Hêrakleiton* (*M* 7.349, 9.337, 10.216). This at first appears to mean "Aenesidemus according to Heraclitus," but that is of course impossible.[21] It is hard to know exactly how to translate it; Malcolm Schofield has suggested that it is equivalent to "Aenesidemus' version of Heraclitus," and R. J. Hankinson has seen it as shorthand for a phrase of the form "Aenesidemus *said that*, according to Heraclitus, . . ."[22] Either way, the phrase appears in contexts where it looks as if Aenesidemus was examining or explaining Heraclitean ideas – without necessarily endorsing them, but apparently exhibiting a special interest in them.

But Sextus will have none of this. His response in the chapter we are considering is twofold. On the one hand, he points out that Heraclitus says many things dogmatically; the point is made in general terms at the outset

[18] Significant recent treatments are Polito 2004; Pérez-Jean 2005; Schofield 2007; a brief sketch of the main issues is Hankinson 2010, section IV.

[19] E.g., Brochard 2002, livre III, ch. IV.

[20] For other examples of this usage in Sextus, see *M* 7.263, *M* 8.60; for an example outside Sextus, see Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.7, 6.

[21] At least, if this Heraclitus is the Presocratic Heraclitus of Ephesus. But this seems clearly to be the Heraclitus at issue in *PH* 1, and Sextus never suggests that he has more than one Heraclitus in mind.

[22] Schofield 2007, 272 n. 3; Hankinson 2010, 116. Pérez-Jean 2005, 13–16, does not come down in favor of any single definitive reading of the phrase; however, like these other two, she sees it broadly as indicating Aenesidemus as an *interpreter* of Heraclitus – which might or might not be accompanied by agreement with him on some points. See also Viano 2002.

(*PH* 1.210) and is later illustrated, one of the examples being precisely the end point of the "route" to Heracliteanism that Aenesidemus is said to have referred to – that opposites do not merely appear to apply, but do in fact apply (*huparchein*), to the same thing (*PH* 1.212). On the other hand, he urges that there is nothing specially skeptical about the notion that opposites appear to apply to the same thing; this is just common knowledge – or more precisely, a common "preconception" (*prolêpsis*) – which skeptics, Heracliteans, or any other philosophers can make use of as they please (*PH* 1.211). Thus there is no reason to regard skepticism in particular as making a contribution (Sextus' word is *sunergei*, *PH* 1.212) toward the Heraclitean outlook; returning in conclusion to Aenesidemus' notion of a "route," he calls the very idea absurd (*PH* 1.212).

The vehemence of Sextus' disagreement with the founder of the Pyrrhonist movement to which he himself belonged is more than a little surprising. And here at least, even if nowhere else, we have Sextus opposing a rapprochement with another philosopher that originated within his own school. What is also remarkable is the comprehensiveness of his desire to avoid all possible connections with this other philosophy. Neither Sextus' own report in this chapter nor any other evidence gives us reason to think that Aenesidemus took Heraclitus to have been a skeptic (as did the people whose views are reported in Diogenes' list of proto-skeptics); all we need to suppose is that he was interested in some themes in Heraclitus that resonated with his own concerns. There are indeed many fragments of Heraclitus, usually grouped by scholars under the heading of the Unity of Opposites, that could be said to express the idea that opposites apply to the same thing, and one could well imagine that this kind of material could have been useful to Aenesidemus in compiling his Ten Modes. To judge from the occurrences in Sextus of the phrase *Ainêsidêmos kata Hêrakleiton*, his interest in Heraclitus extended beyond this; the topics at issue there are the location of thought (*dianoia*, *M* 7.349), the relation between whole and part (*M* 9.337), and the nature of time (*M* 10.216). But this too carries no implication as to his having adopted a Heraclitean position or considered Heraclitus himself to have been a skeptic. Why, then, is the Heraclitean connection so objectionable to Sextus? Merely establishing that Heraclitus was not a skeptic is not enough for him. That would be compatible with acknowledging the limited common ground implied in Aenesidemus' remark about the "route" to Heraclitus' philosophy; but Sextus is eager to banish the whole idea of the "route" as well. It looks as if he simply wants no association with Heraclitus at all. Or, to use again his own language in the chapters to follow, it looks as if he wants to rebut not

only the notion that Heraclitus' philosophy is "the same" as skepticism, but even the suggestion that it "has a commonality" with skepticism – or, for that matter, that it is really a "nearby" philosophy, despite his willingness to use this term in introducing this part of the book.

When he gets to the next philosophy, that of Democritus (*PH* 1.213–14), Sextus calms down a little. Democritus is said to "have a commonality" with skepticism, and the reason is that he, like the skeptics, makes use of oppositions such as that honey appears sweet to some and bitter to others. This is then said to lead him to use the phrase *ou mallon*, "no more" – such as in "honey is no more sweet than bitter" – a phrase that, according to the proponents of this view, "is skeptical" (*skeptikên ousan*, *PH* 1.213). Sextus' first response is that *ou mallon*, though certainly a phrase used by skeptics, is not skeptical in the hands of Democritus; he uses it to deny that either alternative is the case, whereas the skeptics use it to express indecision as to whether both alternatives are the case or neither is;[23] in the former usage it is part of a dogmatic assertion, and that is what the skeptic avoids. The thought behind Democritus' reported use of the phrase is clearly that expressed in the famous fragment "By convention color, by convention sweet, by convention bitter; in reality atoms and void" (Galen, *On Medical Experience* 15.7 = DK68B125); on this view honey is not in reality either sweet or bitter,[24] and the "no more" statement would be saying precisely this. It is no accident that Sextus immediately follows his first response with a reference to the other half of this fragment, "in reality atoms and void," claiming quite reasonably that this is an assertion about how things really are, and hence quite different from anything that the skeptics would be prepared to say (*PH* 1.214). In closing Sextus comments that this is so "even if he [Democritus] begins from the lack of uniformity [*anômalia*] among apparent things," which is at least an implicit recognition that there is some "commonality" between

[23] It is at first sight surprising that Sextus does not mention the possibility that *one* of the two alternatives is the case, with further indecision as to which one. Presumably this is because he is responding to Democritus, who says that "neither" is the correct answer. Sextus' reply is: yes, it could be neither, but it could just as well be the opposite (that is, both) – and this is a genuinely skeptical use of *ou mallon*, which is all he needs for the current purpose.

[24] To call honey sweet only "by convention" may seem strange; surely it tastes sweet (to people whose sense organs are in a normal state) regardless of our conventions. The explanation of this that I find most satisfactory is that the convention consists in saying unqualified things like "honey is sweet," which implies (or so it might well be thought) that one takes sweetness to be a property of honey itself – that is, of the collection of atoms and void that we call honey – rather than what it really is, namely, an effect of the interaction of these atoms and void with the atoms and void that constitute ourselves. For this reading, see Furley 1993, 77–8.

Democritus and himself. Still, despite this more conciliatory tone, the overriding focus is on the differences rather than the similarities.

The same is even more clearly true in the case of Protagoras, who is the other thinker said (on the interpretation Sextus is scrutinizing) to exhibit a "commonality" with skepticism (*PH* 1.217). Here there is no explicit acknowledgment of common ground, and there is at least an implicit rejection of the argument for the claim of "commonality." This argument appeals to Protagoras' famous statement "A human being is measure of all things"; this statement shows, we are told, that "he posits only the things that are apparent to each person, and in this way he brings in relativity" (*PH* 1.216). Sextus' response is that if we spell out more fully what the "measure" doctrine involves, we will see that, on the contrary, it commits Protagoras to dogmatic claims about how things actually are, which makes his position quite different from skepticism (*PH* 1.217–19). According to Sextus' reading of the doctrine, the world is variable, and is in itself such as to be, on any given occasion, any of the ways it appears to some perceiver.[25] Hence Protagoras does not merely posit appearances, as alleged by the people who said he had a "commonality" with skepticism; every appearance is also (on the particular occasion on which it presents itself) the way things really are. This interpretation seems to derive ultimately from Plato's *Theaetetus*, specifically the elaborate theory of perception that is presented as the ontological underpinning of the "measure" doctrine (156a–157c), although there are intrusions of post-Platonic terminology – notably, "matter" (*hulê*) as the name for the changeable underlying reality – and a number of examples are borrowed from the fourth of the Ten Modes (*PH* 1.100). In any case, the true meaning of the "measure" doctrine is said to be that "a human being is the criterion for the things that there are; for all the things that appear to human beings also are" (*PH* 1.219). Hence Protagoras is committed to any number of assertions about how things actually are – whereas the skeptics regard these matters as unclear and suspend judgment about them.

Between the chapters on Democritus and Protagoras Sextus includes a brief chapter on the Cyrenaics (*PH* 1.215). The Cyrenaic view is declared by some to be the same as skepticism on the ground that "it too says that

[25] Sextus says that "the *logoi* of all the things that appear are underlying in the matter" (*PH* 1.218). As Annas and Barnes 1994, 56, n. 234, point out, it is not clear exactly what *logoi* means here. But the general idea must be that this matter has the capability of transforming itself so as to have in reality any of the characteristics that it appears to have to someone on a particular occasion.

we apprehend only the ways we are affected."[26] It is not clear whether Sextus accepts the point implied in the word "too" (*kai*), that the skeptics themselves claim that we "apprehend the ways we are affected"; in fact I think he would be well advised to avoid (as he generally does) the dogmatic notion of "apprehension" (*katalêpsis*) altogether in describing the skeptical outlook.[27] In any case, we do not need to read him here as doing more than reporting the reason given by those who made the claim of identity. His response to the claim is twofold. First, he says that the Cyrenaics have a different end from the skeptics – namely, pleasure rather than tranquility – and moreover they are described as "strongly asserting" (*diabebaioumenos*) that this is the end, rather than the much more tentative way in which the skeptics elsewhere propose their end.[28] And second, the Cyrenaics do not suspend judgment about external things, but make the definite assertion (*apophainontai*) that they have an inapprehensible nature; this makes them, in the terminology of modern scholarship, negative dogmatists rather than skeptics. The Cyrenaics may have interesting resemblances to the figure of the skeptic in modern philosophy.[29] But Sextus has no trouble in showing that his form of skepticism, centered as it is around suspension of judgment, is clearly distinct from their philosophy.

III

Following the chapter on Protagoras is the one on the Academics, which is the longest and most complicated of all of them. In this case we have evidence, quite distinct from that considered in Section I, that shows a debate concerning whether or not their philosophy is the same as Pyrrhonism; we should begin by considering this, since I left it aside earlier in the interest of simplicity. First, we should note that Aenesidemus founded the later Pyrrhonist movement in large part as a reaction against the Academy,

[26] I follow Annas and Barnes 1994 in retaining the ms. reading *katalambanein* (supported by the medieval Latin translation *comprehendere*), rather than altering to *katalambanesthai* as do several editors; the Greek is a little awkward but not impossibly so. "Ways we are affected" translates *pathê*.

[27] On this, see O'Keefe 2011.

[28] "Up to now we say that the skeptic's end is *ataraxia* . . ." (*PH* 1.25). Both the "up to now" (*achri nun*) and the restriction of the end to the skeptics protect Sextus from dogmatism. The end is put forward as a report of the skeptics' own experience (cf. *PH* 1.4) – this is what they have in fact pursued – not as what human beings in general should or naturally do pursue, which is how the *telos* is normally understood in ancient Greek ethics, or even as what the skeptics are committed to pursuing in the future. (*PH* 1.12 does suggest that Sextus thinks philosophers in general aim for *ataraxia*, but his actual specification of the *telos* makes no mention of anyone besides the skeptics themselves.)

[29] Although here too the similarities should not be exaggerated; on this, see Bett 2018a.

of which he was originally a member.[30] The chapter of Photius that contains a summary of Aenesidemus' *Pyrrhonist Discourses* has much to say about the failure of the Academics to maintain a genuinely skeptical – that is, suspensive – attitude; they are several times said to make definite assertions, and in this respect to be no different from their supposed rivals, the Stoics (*Bibl.* 169b36–170a11, 170a14–17, 22–38). The charge is said to apply especially to the Academy of Aenesidemus' own day (170a14–15), but it is issued quite generally. From Photius' account it looks as if this topic occupied a considerable portion of the first book of Aenesidemus' work. Since this distancing of the Pyrrhonists from the Academics was an important impetus for the Pyrrhonist movement itself, I assume (though I do not think it can be absolutely proven) that the idea that the Academics' philosophy was the same as that of the Pyrrhonists did not originate *within* Pyrrhonism, at some point between Aenesidemus and Sextus.[31]

But others clearly were prepared to maintain this, including in the period immediately before Sextus. Aulus Gellius reports "an old question, dealt with by many Greek writers, whether there is any difference, and how much, between the Pyrrhonian and Academic philosophers" (11.5.6). Gellius does not express a final opinion on this himself, saying that although there is a lot in common between the two schools, "they have been thought" (*existimati sunt*) to differ in that the Academics maintain as a definite conclusion that nothing can be known, whereas the Pyrrhonists suspend judgment on this question. As we shall see, this is one of the main points Sextus uses to distinguish himself from some Academics, and there is other evidence for this reading of the Academics (e.g., Cic. *Acad.* 1.45). Gellius does not tell us who thought this, nor who, if anyone, opposed the view that they differed in this way. Since he has just mentioned Favorinus (11.5.5), since Favorinus elsewhere figures in Gellius as both source and character, and since Gellius is not otherwise particularly interested in skepticism, the chances are good that he gets his information on this topic from Favorinus; but that does not tell us whether Favorinus endorsed the idea of the difference or opposed it. However, what Gellius tells us in the immediately preceding passage is that Favorinus wrote a work in ten books

[30] On the last point, see Photius *Bibl.* 169b32–5. This reading of the passage was challenged by Decleva Caizzi 1992, but the challenge was refuted by Mansfeld 1995.

[31] Hostility to the skeptical Academy (as we now call it) is also evident in the early Pyrrhonist period. Timon, Pyrrho's disciple, is openly scathing about Arcesilaus (DL 4.42). He does elsewhere seem to allow that Arcesilaus borrowed something from Pyrrho (DL 4.33). But in the same fragment he pictures him as also indebted to Menedemus and Diodorus; his point, I take it, is that the resulting mixture is a disaster from the Pyrrhonist perspective. On this, see further Bett 2015b, section V.

called *Pyrrhonian Modes*; Diogenes Laertius also tells us of Favorinus' interest in the Modes (9.87). Since Favorinus was a self-professed Academic, this tends to suggest that he saw the two schools as more similar than different; ten books would be a lot to write unless one saw something valuable and congenial in one's topic, and the title is simply *Pyrrhonian Modes* – not *Against the Pyrrhonian Modes* or the like, as one might expect if the work was a polemic.[32] In this case the claim of difference would be one that he recorded but did not agree with. Indeed, for reasons of this sort some have even seen Favorinus as Sextus' opponent in his chapter on the Academics.[33] I tend to doubt this, if only because Sextus in general, for whatever reason, does not seem to engage directly with the philosophy of his own time.[34] But if I am right about Favorinus' stance, it would admittedly be an instance of the kind of view Sextus is anxious to resist. In any case, the extent of the discussion on this question makes clear that the view that the two philosophies were essentially the same had a continuing attraction for some.

Sextus' response distinguishes between several phases of the Academy, and treats each of them separately.[35] He begins with Plato, acknowledging that there is a range of interpretations of him of varying degrees of dogmatism (*PH* 1.221). As he says, the only one that he needs to refute is the one that says that Plato is "purely skeptical" or "aporetic"; any interpretation that attributes to Plato some degree of dogmatism has already conceded that he is not skeptical (*PH* 1.222). And the response to the "purely skeptical" interpretation is that Plato makes a great many definite assertions.[36] If he assents to these, he is clearly not a skeptic; and if he puts them forward as more plausible than their alternatives, he is not adhering to the Pyrrhonist posture of seeing both (or all) the alternatives as

[32] Gellius' information has been suspected; for a defense of both his text and his credibility, see Holford-Strevens 1997, 213 n. 96. Note also that Plutarch, Favorinus' teacher, wrote a work *On the Difference between Pyrrhonists and Academics* (Lamprias Catalog 64). But that title does not tell us whether he saw the difference as significant or as exaggerated by others; and in any case, we need not assume that Favorinus always thought the same as his teacher.

[33] Holford-Strevens 1997, 212–17; Ioppolo 2002, 66–70. [34] On this, see further Bett 2017.

[35] Ioppolo 2009, 32–3, argues that this division is strategic, dictated largely by the need to separate Arcesilaus from the rest. See chapter 1 of this work for a much more detailed account of this chapter of Sextus than I can provide here.

[36] One might better say that characters in Plato's dialogues make these assertions (except, of course, in the *Letters*, where the ancients were more ready than most modern scholars to find the voice of Plato). But Sextus agrees with the many people through the ages who have seen Plato as to some degree speaking through his characters.

of "equal strength" (*isostheneia*).[37] He concedes that there are parts of Plato's work that have a skeptical aspect (*PH* 1.223, 225),[38] but insists that unless one is skeptical through and through, one is a dogmatist; holding definite views, or taking certain things to be plausible, on even one subject disqualifies one from consideration as a skeptic. As in the case of Democritus, there is an admission of some common ground, but this is framed in such a way as to maximize the impression of difference.[39]

The idea that skepticism must be complete if it is to count as skepticism at all is then further illustrated by the case of Xenophanes as interpreted by Timon (*PH* 1.224–5). Xenophanes is presented as regretting his lapse into the holding of doctrines and his only partial adherence to a skeptical outlook; Sextus' point, again, is that partial adherence is no adherence, and he concludes this digression by referring back to the case of Plato (*PH* 1.225). The digression is unexpected in that Xenophanes had nothing to do with the Academy. But the verses of Timon that he cites provide a vivid image of what it is like to be only partially (that is, not really) skeptical,[40] and also give Sextus an excuse to check off one more philosopher – in this case, one for whom the early Pyrrhonist Timon had some degree of respect – as clearly distinct from the skeptics.

Sextus now turns to the "new" Academy – that is, the Academy of Carneades and Clitomachus – and argues on two grounds that its outlook is different from skepticism (*PH* 1.226–31). First, these Academics assert as a definite conclusion that everything is inapprehensible, which makes them negative dogmatists.[41] Second, they treat some appearances as more

[37] As we shall see shortly, a similar point is made about the New Academy of Carneades, although in their case a response may have been available. By contrast, there is no reason to think that Plato had any special interest in avoiding taking things to be true, whether definitively or tentatively.

[38] Sextus has in mind the dialogues that modern scholars sometimes call "aporetic." These are referred to as the "gymnastic" or "training" works (*PH* 1.221), the idea being that they are designed to introduce people to philosophical discussion in preparation for the works that involve positive doctrines. This terminology was not invented by Sextus; see, e.g., DL 3.49, in a neutral classification of different kinds of Platonic dialogues. But it suits his purposes nicely insofar as it suggests that the skeptical-looking parts of Plato are really just preparatory to, and hence less serious than, the non-skeptical parts.

[39] At one point Sextus compares his own view on Plato's relation to skepticism with that of Aenesidemus (*PH* 1.222); unfortunately the text is corrupt, so we cannot simply read what he said Aenesidemus' position on this was. I have argued elsewhere that Sextus is here agreeing with Aenesidemus (Bett 2006); see also Spinelli 2000; Bonazzi 2011. I therefore do not treat this as a case of intra-Pyrrhonist dispute; but for another reading, see Ioppolo 2009, 52–74.

[40] What it would mean to be properly skeptical may not be precisely the same in Timon's estimation and in Sextus'. But Sextus' reading of Timon, according to which Xenophanes is portrayed as partly but not wholly achieving the ideal attitude, seems plausible.

[41] The same point was made in the very first chapter of the work (*PH* 1.3) as Sextus was introducing skepticism and its rivals.

plausible or persuasive (*pithana*) than others, which already involves them in the holding of opinions. It is not clear that either of these claims is fair to the Academics.[42] While we have good evidence that Carneades *argued* that nothing can be apprehended, or that there is no criterion of truth – including from Sextus himself (*M* 7.159–65; see also, e.g., Cic. *Acad.* 2.28) – it is not obvious that he meant to assent to this conclusion, as opposed to offering it as a counter-balance to the positive arguments of others on the criterion, especially the Stoics.[43] On the second point, Cicero reports that Clitomachus (following Carneades) made the case that one could *follow* impressions – that is, make use of them for the purposes of action and discussion – without assenting to them in any objectionable sense; one way of reading this is that their persuasiveness consists simply in their psychological influence, and one need not endorse the truth of any proposition – which is what the objectionable kind of assent would be – in order for them to have this effect (*Acad.* 2.104).[44] Some have found this account unintelligible.[45] But since Sextus himself allows that the skeptics follow or yield to some impressions without holding opinions, and is prepared to borrow the term "persuasive" to refer to these (*PH* 1.230), it does not look as if he would agree. And so it is not clear why he should not allow that the Academics' appeal to persuasiveness without assent (at least, assent of a sort that would compromise them) can be understood in the same way – instead of insisting, as he does, that they follow their persuasive impressions with a "strong inclination" (*prokliseôs sphodras*, *PH* 1.230) that commits them to holding opinions. There is, then, at least a possibility that Sextus is forcing the evidence so as to maximize the sense of a difference between himself and the New Academy.

Sextus ends the chapter with a brief look at the late Academics Philo and Antiochus (*PH* 1.235). Here we need not doubt that the distinctions he draws between their philosophies and his own have some basis; there is plenty of other evidence that Philo was not a skeptic in anything like Sextus' terms and that Antiochus was not a skeptic in any sense.[46] But before these Sextus spends a little time on Arcesilaus, the figure who is generally regarded as having turned the Academy in a skeptical direction, and this is more interesting.

[42] On this, see further Ioppolo 2009, 35–42.
[43] On this point, see, e.g., Thorsrud 2010, section IV.
[44] Bett 1990 and Frede 1997 include versions of this kind of interpretation.
[45] See Thorsrud 2010, 73–4; Perin 2013, 321–2.
[46] A good brief review of the evidence is the introduction to Brittain 2006, especially section II. For Philo, see also Brittain 2001; for Antiochus, see Sedley 2012.

Sextus begins by saying that Arcesilaus' outlook and his are virtually the same (*mian einai schedon*, *PH* 1.232); in contrast with the other Academics discussed in this chapter, Arcesilaus is said to suspend judgment about everything, and this is supported by some points on which he differs from the new Academy as Sextus has just depicted it.[47] This is remarkable seeing that the aim of this whole section of the book has been to explain the differences between skepticism and the allegedly "nearby" philosophies; in the case of Arcesilaus, Sextus seems not to find anything relevant to say. However, he immediately goes on to mention two other interpretations that put Arcesilaus in a different light. One is that while they say much the same things, Arcesilaus says them in a dogmatic register, so that on his view suspension of judgment is by nature a good thing and assent by nature a bad thing (*PH* 1.233). The other is that Arcesilaus was really a secret Platonist and used skeptical argumentation as a test to see who was ready to receive the true philosophy of Platonism (*PH* 1.234) – much as, on a view that we glanced at earlier, some of Plato's own philosophical activity was designed for training rather than indoctrination and for this reason had a skeptical appearance.[48] Sextus does not say that he accepts either of these other interpretations, but nor does he explicitly repudiate them; as a result, the status of Arcesilaus vis-à-vis skepticism is left somewhat unclear.

I close this section with a very few remarks on the final chapter on medical Empiricism. Here Sextus, himself an Empiricist, appears to reject an identification between skepticism and the Empiric school (*PH* 1.236). He makes this conditional on the Empiricists affirming that unclear things are inapprehensible, which would mean that they were negative dogmatists. But he leaves this on the table as an unanswered accusation, and instead spends several sections explaining why another medical approach, Methodism, would be more appropriate for a skeptic (*PH* 1.237–41). The issues here are very difficult and cannot be discussed on this occasion.[49] I will simply point out that the Methodist school of medicine, like Arcesilaus, is a case where Sextus allows a similarity – "kinship" (*oikeiotês*) is his word (*PH* 1.241) – and does not hasten to diminish it by

[47] Sextus' comment that Arcesilaus "absolutely seems to me to share in [*koinônein*] the Pyrrhonists' words [*logois*]" seems to mark a closer similarity than the one claimed by the other side in the case of Democritus and Protagoras: that they "have a commonality" (*koinônian*) with skepticism. In addition to the "absolutely" (*panu*), *koinônein*, "share in," seems to suggest a comprehensive overlap, whereas *koinônia* is more suggestive of individual features in common. But however this may be, the key point is what Sextus says next – that the two outlooks are almost the same.

[48] See again note 38. [49] A good recent discussion is Allen 2010.

emphasizing differences. It is a qualified kinship (*ouch'haplôs*), but it is greater than that of any other medical school, and there are no stated considerations that undermine it.

IV

Let me try to sum up the results of this survey. Sextus is in general extremely resistant to claims of identity or even similarity between his brand of skepticism and other philosophies. This is true even when the common ground was suggested by an earlier Pyrrhonist, as we saw in the case of Aenesidemus and Heraclitus. In addition, throughout his work he is notably reticent about appealing to predecessors within his own Pyrrhonist tradition. In both respects Sextus is strikingly different from the skeptical Academy. As I mentioned at the outset, these Academics look back to Socrates and Plato, and this is no surprise; but they also appeal to numerous Presocratics as predecessors.[50] And much of the later history of the skeptical Academy revolves around a debate between rival factions, each claiming to be the true heirs of Carneades.[51] Sextus, however, seems to go out of his way to emphasize that he and his anonymous Pyrrhonist friends are quite different from everyone else. What might explain this seemingly extreme attitude?

The simplest approach to this question, I think, is to take him at his word: Sextus considers Pyrrhonist skepticism to be an entirely distinct kind of enterprise from every other philosophical movement, and he thinks that this point cannot be overemphasized. Another way to express this point is that skepticism is not a *philosophy* at all, at least as that term is frequently understood. Although Sextus opens *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* by distinguishing three main kinds of philosophy, of which skepticism is one (*PH* 1.1–3), and although he sometimes speaks elsewhere of the "skeptical philosophy" (e.g., *PH* 1.4, 5), he also frequently speaks of non-skeptical philosophy as "so-called [*kaloumenês* or *legomenês*] philosophy" (e.g., *PH* 1.6, 18), which carries, I think, two implications: first, that these philosophers claim to be doing something that they in fact fail to do, and second, that in this understanding of what philosophy is or should be, Sextus himself has nothing to do with philosophy. Their pretension, I take it, is that they have succeeded, at least to some degree, in discovering and describing the true nature of things in a systematic way; and it is perhaps no accident that the phrase "so-called philosophy" occurs exclusively in

[50] On this, see Brittain and Palmer 2001. [51] For a survey of this history, see Lévy 2010.

passages where one or more of the three main parts of this systematic enterprise (that is, logic, physics, and ethics) are the topic of discussion. (Sometimes, too, the parts themselves are referred to as "so-called," e.g., *PH* 3.167, 278.) For convenience let us call this philosophy$_D$. This is not, of course, the only conception of philosophy, which is why Sextus does not simply reject the term as applied to skepticism; but it is one that might well be considered to be dominant in the Hellenistic period and later antiquity. It is this conception that the Peripatetic Aristocles has in mind when he says of Pyrrhonism (in a phase that predates Sextus but postdates Aenesidemus[52]), "I do not think it should even be called a philosophy, since it does away with the starting-points of philosophizing" (in Eusebius, *Praep. evang.* 14.18.30). Assuming the same conception of philosophy, I think that Sextus' reply would be "exactly!" – and that this gets to the heart of what he is concerned with in these chapters. If that is what philosophy is, at least according to a widespread conception, then it is understandable that he would want to make clear that he is doing something fundamentally different, and therefore that he would want to reject all associations with those who do qualify as philosophers in that conception.[53]

Now, as I noted at the beginning, in the period leading up to and including Sextus himself, philosophers so understood tended more and more to identify themselves with founder figures from the past; the appeal to some earlier authority was an important part of how one legitimized one's positions. Thus, if Sextus wants to distance himself from all associations with philosophy$_D$, this may point to a further explanation for his rejection of claims concerning predecessors to his own school. It is not just

[52] Aristocles' dates are controversial, but he seems to speak of Aenesidemus as relatively recent (in Eusebius, *Praep. evang.* 14.18.29).

[53] One might object that if Sextus means to distinguish two different conceptions of philosophy, he ought to have made this clear and explained what each conception amounts to. Now first, as I have noted, Sextus does use the term "so-called philosophy" to mark the sort of approach to the subject that he wants nothing to do with; the term itself indicates that he considers philosophy of this kind a hopeless quest, and the contexts in which he invokes the term send a strong signal that this is due to its constructive and systematic ambitions. By contrast, he is prepared to use the unqualified term "philosophy" to apply to skepticism and dogmatism equally. While this perhaps does not tell us everything we might wish to know about the distinction he is pointing to, it is by no means wholly opaque. But, second, I think there are limits to how much clarity Sextus actually wants on this topic. I am the one who, for the purpose of elucidating his intentions on the matters we have been concerned with, wishes to mark a clear distinction between two conceptions of philosophy present in his work, and I hope I have given a tolerable explanation of at least the one he repudiates. Sextus himself, I believe, is deliberately being somewhat less forthcoming about what does or does not count as philosophy, with a view to prompting further reflection, and ideally suspension of judgment, about that very question. I have said a little more about this in Chapter 1.

that the comparisons to which he is responding were made between skepticism and philosophers$_D$; the very appeal to predecessors may itself have come to be connected, in his mind at least, with the notion of doctrinal succession, and hence with philosophy$_D$.[54] This may also explain why he says so little about his own predecessors within the Pyrrhonist tradition; perhaps the very idea of a *tradition* of thinking, with important founding figures, carries too much of an implication of the transmission of doctrines – or could too easily be understood in that way by others not willing to examine what Pyrrhonism actually is.[55] If there is anything to this suggestion, then the point with which I began – Sextus' position as an outlier with respect to the appeal to predecessors – should not really be surprising after all. It is integral to his conception of what he is doing that he should wish to go conspicuously in the opposite direction to other philosophers – or rather, in the opposite direction to philosophers$_D$, among whom he very deliberately does not wish to count himself.[56]

It may seem surprising that Sextus should extend this attitude even to the Academy, which was generally considered to have been skeptical in the Hellenistic period. However, as I said, the Academy, including in its skeptical period, has no trouble with appealing to predecessors, Plato prominently included. Both because he has legitimate reason to consider Plato (at least in some moods) as a philosopher$_D$, and because to him the appeal to predecessors may itself have the feel of philosophy$_D$, this could have prompted Sextus to paint all of them, or almost all, as quite distinct from the Pyrrhonists. Even in the one case, Arcesilaus, where he cannot avoid admitting that there is a lot of common ground, he will not simply say so, but puts this alongside non-skeptical interpretations of his thought

[54] I do not mean to imply that there is anything inherently dogmatic about the appeal to predecessors; the idea is just that exposure to numerous examples of dogmatists who did appeal to predecessors could have led to such an association for Sextus – or at least, as I go on to suggest, to a worry that *others* might read him with such an association in mind. I also do not claim to have direct evidence for this contention; I merely point to its ability to explain some things that need explanation.

[55] This may also be a factor in Sextus' care in explaining the sense in which Pyrrhonism is a school (*hairesis*, *PH* 1.16–17). What he actually says is that it is not a school if that implies the acceptance of doctrines, but it is a school if that just means a certain method or way of life (*agôgê*). This was not just his idea; Diogenes also says something similar about the senses in which Pyrrhonism is or is not a school (1.20). But the notion of a school might also suggest a succession of thinkers over time who had made a certain set of intellectual commitments; if so, Sextus would have an additional reason to worry that calling Pyrrhonism a school, without being highly specific about what that means, might give people the wrong idea.

[56] I mentioned earlier that Sextus does not seem to engage explicitly with the philosophy of his own time. But if he was aware at least in a general way of the trend that I referred to at the beginning of this paragraph, that would give more point to his refusal to play the game of appealing to predecessors. In Bett 2017 I may have exaggerated Sextus' isolation from his own time and place.

and hence creates uncertainty about what he has just said. It is also interesting that he treats Arcesilaus out of chronological order, after the New Academy instead of before. The effect is to reinforce the sense of the New Academy, which now comes immediately after Plato, as following in Plato's footsteps – since in his portrayal they, like Plato, rely to a large extent on persuasiveness or plausibility – and to make Arcesilaus look more like an isolated figure not immersed in a tradition. If being part of a tradition itself has a suspect air for Sextus, this makes good sense in light of his qualified willingness to acknowledge Arcesilaus as a kindred spirit.

As for the Methodists, the other group with which he admits some common ground, two things may be said. First, they would not generally be counted as philosophers (of any sort), and so the risks involved in being associated with philosophers would not have applied in their case. Second, whether or not the Methodists were in fact free from all doctrine,[57] Sextus focuses exclusively on their role as practitioners who follow the way things appear; while, as we saw, he does not suggest that they are exactly the same as the skeptics, he takes the trouble to paint them in a light that will make them look as little like philosophers$_D$ as possible. It is therefore consistent with the aims that I have tentatively ascribed to Sextus that the Methodists, as he portrays them, should come out as the most favored among all the thinkers he considers in this part of the book.[58]

[57] This is a delicate and complicated question; see Frede 1982; Allen 2010.

[58] I would like to thank an anonymous reader for the journal in which this chapter originally appeared, whose comments on an earlier version prompted some rethinking and, I hope, a clearer focus in the chapter, especially the final section.

CHAPTER 3

Humor as Philosophical Subversion, Especially in the Skeptics

I Introduction

Aristotle is not exactly a comedian. He wrote about comedy in the lost second book of the *Poetics*, and he wrote about wittiness (*eutrapelia*) in his ethical works.[1] But he does not exhibit much of either. What humor there is in Aristotle seems to fall into two main varieties. First, there is wordplay that engages the reader's attention, which can perhaps be seen as an instance of a technique he describes in *Rhetoric* 3.10, that of saying "smart things and things that create a good impression" (*ta asteia kai ta eudokimounta*, 1410b6).[2] Early in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he says that in endeavoring to determine the principles (*archai*) of ethics, we should begin (*arkteon*) with things known to us (1095b2–4). A little later, introducing the idea of the function (*ergon*) of a human being, he asks whether we can seriously consider that a human being as such (as opposed to people in various occupations) is *argon* (1097b28–30) – which is intentionally ambiguous between "without function" and "lazy." In *De caelo*, introducing the topic of minimal magnitudes, he says that positing such a minimal magnitude (*toulachiston*) will make the biggest difference (*ta megista*) in mathematics (271b10–11). And in *De Interpretatione*, discussing names, he says that "non-human being" (*ouk anthrôpos*) is not a name, and adds that this category has no name (16a29–31).[3]

[1] On the latter, see Walker forthcoming, in the volume for which this chapter was originally written.

[2] Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own. In the case of Timon, I sometimes draw on translations in Bett 2000a and Bett 2015b. In the case of Sextus I generally draw on Bett 1997, Bett 2005, and Bett 2012.

[3] For drawing my attention to these examples and connecting them with the *Rhetoric* passage, I am indebted to Marko Malink.

The other type of humor in Aristotle is critical; to put it bluntly, someone or something is made fun of. There is some overlap with the previous category in that wordplay is sometimes the method. Thus, in his discussion in book 1 of *De anima* of the view that the soul is a *harmonia*, Aristotle comments that it is difficult to "harmonize" (*epharmozein*) the data with this theory, and that it is "more harmonious" (*harmozei de mallon*) to conceive of health, and bodily excellences in general, as harmonies than to regard the soul in this way (408a1–4). And in book 4 of the *Physics*, considering the idea of void (*kenon*), he remarks that this idea is "vacuous" or "empty" (*kenon*, 216a26–7). But on other occasions he drops the decorous punning and goes after an opponent more actively, and here things get more lively. A good example is in *Metaphysics* Γ, where Aristotle discusses those who claim to deny the Law of Non-Contradiction. He catalogs at considerable length the absurdities that this leads to, and in a number of places it seems pretty clear that he is making fun of the holders (or purported holders) of the view; this is perhaps most obvious in the places where he considers what the *actions* of someone who actually believed it would be like. If you really thought that nothing was of any particular character rather than its opposite, there would be no basis for choosing any one course of action over any other; you might as well walk into a well or chasm, instead of staying on level ground – which is what you obviously would do in real life (1008b15–16, cf. 1010b10–11). Another case appears in his survey of previous philosophers' views on causes in the first book of the *Metaphysics*, where he says that anyone who posited *nous*, "mind," as a cause in nature, over and above the purely material causes recognized by the early physicists, "came across as a sober person in comparison with the random speakers [*eikêi legontas*] who came before" (984b17–18).

To my mind, these cases of overt ridicule are the most appealing examples of humor in Aristotle. In any case, they point to one major function of humor in philosophy: drawing attention to where one might go wrong. This need not involve an attack on someone else's thinking, though it very often will; it could be used to avoid the pitfalls of a view that might seem initially attractive. Sometimes it can prepare the ground for a positive treatment of the topic in question, but this is by no means always so. In what follows, I am going to explore a number of the ways in which this critical variety of humor is employed in the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition. Perhaps not surprisingly, this kind of humor is especially easy to find among the people who see something suspect in the whole enterprise of philosophy itself – or at least of philosophy as normally understood, whatever that might amount to. For this reason I will be

spending spend most of my time on Skeptics.[4] But as we have already seen, it is not only Skeptics who can usefully employ such humor, and so the discussion will not be entirely restricted to them; in the final section I will illustrate its use by several other non-Skeptics (or Dogmatists, in the Skeptics' own terminology). My sense is that this kind of humor is the dominant one in philosophy; but it would be very hard to demonstrate that, and I will not attempt to do so. It will be sufficient for my purposes to highlight its presence across numerous different periods and schools.[5]

II Timon of Phlius

I began with Aristotle in part because he is a, perhaps the, paradigmatic philosopher, and will therefore serve as a useful foil for the more subversive figures with whom I will be largely concerned. As an example of humor in philosophy that is virtually a polar opposite of Aristotle, one might point to Timon of Phlius, Pyrrho's disciple. In contrasting the two, I do not mean to deny that Timon has a positive philosophical goal; it is to present Pyrrho's attitudes and demeanor as the ideal for humans to strive for. But his pursuit of that goal involves none of the elaborate laying out of arguments, consideration of objections, and construction of theories that mark a philosopher such as Aristotle – and to which the humor that we find in Aristotle's writings is decidedly subordinate. All of that is, from Timon's perspective, pointless, indeed counter-productive. We actually have a line of Timon bemoaning "Aristotle's painful pointlessness" – or perhaps "randomness" would be better (DL 5.11); in any case the Greek word, *eikaiosunê,* is unparalleled, an abstract noun coined apparently for the express purpose of making a jab at Aristotle. As Dee Clayman points out in her study of Timon,[6] there is an exquisite twist here in that pointless or random discourse is precisely what Aristotle would have prided himself on getting beyond; as we saw earlier, Aristotle himself makes fun of

[4] The Cynics also fit the description in the previous sentence. But philosophical humor attributed to the Cynics (of which there is plenty) is a large subject in its own right, and I have more than enough material for a single chapter without them.

[5] I will not have anything to say about the image of Democritus as the laughing philosopher (e.g., Seneca, *De ira* 2.10.5). Apart from its dubious historicity, it is not really a case of humor in philosophy; Democritus' laughter is supposed to have been prompted by, or directed toward, everyday human follies, and it is never connected in any significant way with his philosophical outlook. Nonetheless, it is an instance of laughter in a critical spirit – or "laughing at" – and to that extent conforms to the model I am interested in. Another case of critical humor that is surely relevant to my topic, but outside the usual confines of philosophy, is the philosophical comedy of Lucian.

[6] Clayman 2009: 126, n. 35. Other important works on Timon are Long 1978 and di Marco 1989.

"random speakers" among his predecessors. But *eikaiosunê* is also a characteristic Timon attributes to all those who fail to follow Pyrrho's path. We have a four-line fragment contrasting Pyrrho with these others, quoted by the Peripatetic Aristocles in his critical discussion of Pyrrhonism (preserved verbatim in Eusebius, *Praep. evang.* 14.18.19):

> But such he was I saw him, the man without vanity and unbroken
> By all the things [or perhaps, "all the people"] by which [or, "whom"] both
> the unknown and the celebrated among mortals are overpowered,
> Empty hosts of people, weighed down on this side and that
> By the sufferings of opinion and pointless [*eikaiês*] laying down of the law.[7]

The "opinion" and "laying-down-of-the-law" from which Pyrrho is free no doubt include the everyday opinions and laws of society. But they probably also include the theories and postulates of philosophers who think that they have discovered the detailed workings of nature, of whom Aristotle is a prime example. In this case "laying-down-of-the-law" (*nomothêkês*) has a further irony to it; these theories are mere *nomos* – that is, of human devising – rather than genuinely answering to *phusis*, nature. In any case, these ideas are all "empty" (*koupha*).

The reason for thinking that philosophers (other than Pyrrho himself) are at least one major focus of Timon's attack here is that we have many other fragments of his work making fun of philosophers by name, several of them introduced by the same epic formula "such he was" (*hoion*).[8] Although in many cases the poem from which these lines came is not named, they almost certainly all came from Timon's poem *Silloi*, *Lampoons*, in which, as Diogenes Laertius tells us, Timon "mocks [*sillainei*] the dogmatic philosophers in the form of a parody" (9.111). As has long been recognized (though Diogenes does not tell us this), one important element of the parody is that the narrative is cast as a *Nekuia*, or visit to the Underworld, where Timon encounters a number of now-dead philosophers; among the indications of this are the frequent opening phrases "And then I saw" and the like, recalling the words of Odysseus in the original Underworld visit in *Odyssey* book 11. There are other, earlier spoof Underworld visits, notably that of Aristophanes in the *Frogs* and, closer

[7] In the last line (ἐκ παθέων δόξης τε καὶ εἰκαίης νομοθήκης) I follow Clayman 2009, 81, in taking δόξης and νομοθήκης as dependent on παθέων, rather than reading all three genitives as parallel, as do all other translators I am aware of (including myself in Bett 2000a: 70).

[8] On the epic credentials of this formula, and more generally on the mock-Homeric set-up of the *Silloi*, see Clayman 2009, 78–82.

to our present theme, Plato in the *Protagoras* (314e3–316a2); the scene where Socrates and Hippocrates enter Callias' house and find numerous Sophists, each immersed in their characteristic intellectual activities and being pandered to by rapt followers, is a beautiful piece of satire, and again we find numerous "then I saw"s and other indications (including a mention of Homer himself, 315b9) that Socrates is being cast in the role of Odysseus and the Sophists as the heroes of old. The motif itself is of course heavily ironic; Plato's Sophists are far from heroic, as are Timon's philosophers. But the success of the device depends at least as much on the detailed portraits of the sub-heroes depicted. Plato's focus is mainly on pieces of behavior: Protagoras' followers are always careful not to get in his way, Hippias is seated on a *thronos* pontificating, and Prodicus is still lounging in bed.[9] By contrast, as far as we can tell from the surviving fragments, Timon tends to focus more directly on aspects of the philosophers' ideas and intellectual milieu. We have already seen a penchant for gleeful sarcasm in Timon's approach to philosophers; but his thumbnail sketches of individual philosophers in the *Silloi* are very pointed and often quite savage, in the manner of some political cartoons. I will unpack a couple of examples.

Several fragments about Plato or members of Plato's Academy have fun with Plato's name and the various Greek words that sound like it. A single line, quoted by both Athenaeus (505e) and Diogenes Laertius (3.26), reads *hôs aneplasse Platôn ho peplasmena thaumata eidôs*, "as Plato made them up [or perhaps, "refashioned them"], he who knew fabricated wonders." Without the previous line, it is hard to be sure of the force of *aneplasse*, "made up" or "refashioned";[10] but at any rate we do not have a picture of Plato simply describing reality – instead of describing, something is being devised, and this already invites suspicion. In *peplasmena thaumata*, "fabricated wonders," this is more obvious, although what these *thaumata* might be is open to conjecture. Athenaeus (505d–e) says that it was the dialogues themselves: Gorgias and Phaedo are said to have reacted to the dialogues named after them with "I never said that, nor did the other characters." Other suggestions by recent scholars are the various Platonic accounts of

[9] A case can be made that all three of these illustrate something about the person's thought; Plato depicts these Sophists in action, but thereby intends further implications. However, explaining the details would take us too far afield; I have discussed the case of Prodicus in Bett forthcoming, section I.

[10] Clayman 2009, 103, prefers "remade" and suggests a reference to plagiarism; another fragment accuses the *Timaeus* of being plagiarized (from Pythagorean materials, according to one source, Aulus Gellius 3.17.4).

the ideal state, the Platonic myths,[11] and the puppets in the *Republic*'s cave that cast the shadows on the wall (*thaumata* can mean "puppets," and is so used at 514b6);[12] going in the opposite ontological direction, I would add that Platonic Forms could also, from the point of view of someone unimpressed with philosophical theorizing, qualify as "fabricated wonders"; the resonance with the meaning "puppets" would add an extra piquancy to this, and the next word, *eidôs*, is perhaps also a subtle pun on one of Plato's usual words for the Forms, *eidos*.[13] In any case, Plato (along with, by extension, the Academy) emerges as a wholesale purveyor of fictions; you can even tell it from his name![14]

Turning from Plato to Socrates, we find just one fragment of Timon (in DL 2.19), but it is a zinger:

> But from them the stone cutter, blatherer on the lawful, turned away,
> Spellbinder of the Greeks, who made them nitpicking arguers,
> Sneerer, rhetoricians' snot, sub Attic ironist.[15]

From whom, or from what, did Socrates turn away? Clement (Strom 1.14.63, 3) and Sextus Empiricus (*M* 7.8), both of whom quote the first line, tell us that this refers to Socrates' widely reported turn away from physics and toward ethics; "them," then, are either physicists or questions in physics. But if avoidance of physics is something Timon might have been expected to see as a positive, it is clear that engagement with ethics, at least in Socrates' fashion, is not. "Blatherer on the lawful" (*ennomoleschês*), Sextus plausibly tells us, is a reference to Socrates' concentration on ethics, and the suffix *-leschês* shows this in a light that is anything but favorable; this ending and its cognates always seem to signify idle or trivial talk. A spellbinder or enchanter (*epaoidos*) might in principle be either a positive or a negative influence. But characters who deserve this label, from Homer on, are often dangerous figures, and the combination of a "blatherer" on ethical topics and a spellbinder sounds worrisome indeed. It is also, at least from a certain perspective, fiendishly apt in the case of Socrates, many of whose discussions in Plato's dialogues are both impossible for the

[11] Both these suggestions in di Marco 1989, 153.
[12] Clayman 2009, 103.
[13] Thanks to Franco Trivigno for this last suggestion.
[14] Other fragments playing with Plato's name are at Athenaeus 610b (the individual targeted is not clear), DL 3.7 (Plato), DL 4.42 (Arcesilaus), DL 4.67 (Academics in general). I have discussed the last two of these in Bett 2015b, section V.
[15] ἐκ δ' ἄρα τῶν ἀπέκλινεν ὁ λαξόος, ἐννομολέσχης
Ἑλλήνων ἐπαοιδός, ἀκριβολόγους ἀποφήνας
μυκτὴρ ῥητορόμυκτος, ὑπαττικὸς εἰρωνευτής.

interlocutors to shut down and (in these hapless interlocutors' own view) obsessed, to no good end, with mundane and uninteresting topics such as shoemaking. The latter point seems to be continued in *akribologous*, rendered above as "nitpicking arguers." An *akribologos* is literally someone who uses *logos* in an *akribês* or precise way; here too, in the abstract, the word could be read favorably or unfavorably – surely precision is sometimes a good thing – but the context strongly suggests the negative reading. *Muktêr*, which I have translated "sneerer," literally means "nostril," and here seems to connote a person who looks down his nose at others; again, it is not hard to see this as a good fit for Socrates' dismissive attitude toward many of the things that the average Athenian considered of the highest importance. The suffix *-muktos* in the next word, *rhêtoromuktos* (another unparalleled word) is from the same root and seems to mean "blown out of the nose"; Diogenes' following remark shows that he takes the word to indicate a rhetorical training, and my "rhetoricians' snot" is an attempt to capture the Greek word's combination of the two ideas.[16] Finally, "stone-cutter" alludes to Socrates' family occupation, and completes the portrait by drawing attention to his lowly social origins. A lot is packed into these three lines: personality, methodology, influence, and more. As an extraordinarily subtle yet stinging critique, delivered by means of devilish humor, it would be hard to improve on.

Timon's devilish humor could easily occupy a whole chapter, but I am trying to paint a broader picture. I close my discussion of Timon by noting that not all philosophers are equally worthy of ridicule in his eyes; some did manage to achieve insights that at least partially approximate the ideal attitude of Pyrrho. And it is striking that when Timon tones down the criticism, the humor recedes as well. Parmenides is described as "high-minded" (*megalophrôn*) and "not full of opinions" – opinions being inherently suspect, as we saw in the earlier fragment on Pyrrho – and is said to have "elevated our thought-processes from the deception of appearance" (DL 9.23).[17] There is nothing obviously critical here, and nothing

[16] Is there perhaps a sly reference here to Thrasymsachus' outburst against Socrates in book 1 of the *Republic* – that he needs a nurse to wipe his runny nose (343a)? Thanks to Thomas Johansen for this suggestion. Note that there is also a comic reversal in the contrast between this and the previous word *muktêr*. I am not sure what to make of the following word, "sub-Attic" (*hupattikos*). With most other scholars, I had been inclined to regard it as a comment on Socrates' style. But Michael Trapp pointed out that "Attic" as a stylistic term post-dates Timon by a couple of centuries. Trapp suggested that the force might be not of something inferior to Attic, as my translation implies, but something sneakily, or underhandedly, Attic. But in either case, without the stylistic connotation it is unclear to me what Timon is suggesting.

[17] Reading ἐκ (with LS vol. 2, 16) for the ms. ἐπί.

particularly funny either. Similar things could be said about another fragment on Zeno (of Elea) and Melissus (DL 9.25). Finally, Xenophanes, who seems to have played something of a leading role in the *Silloi* (and to whom a poem called *Silloi* is also attributed, though this may very well be a retrospective title), is depicted regretting his only partial attainment of the correct, Pyrrho-like mindset, saying that he failed to be *amphoterobleptos,* "looking both ways" (Sextus, *PH* 1.224). There is room for debate about what exactly this amounts to and why, in Timon's view, it would have been a good thing.[18] But the fragment continues with Xenophanes' self-criticism, which has to do with his failure to avoid a monistic worldview; there is a certain self-deprecation here, which is perhaps a source of mild humor, but it has nothing like the sting of Timon's lines on Plato or Socrates. The same is true of another fragment quoted immediately afterward in Sextus, where Xenophanes is referred to as *hupatuphos* (partly free from *tuphos* – conceit or bombast) on the basis of having laudably exposed "Homeric deception" – probably a reference to Xenophanes' critique of the Homeric view of the gods – but then gone on to fashion a single unchanging god of his own.[19]

III The Skeptical Academy

However, as we have seen, it is when Timon is in full critical mode that the humor is on full display. At its most intense, this brings with it a skewering of individual philosophers. But there is also at least a broad suggestion that philosophy itself – or at least, philosophy understood as the development of detailed theories explaining how the world works and accounting for the appearances – is a suspect, as well as laughable, activity that we should keep at arm's length. We can find something of the same combination in the much more extensive surviving writings of Sextus Empiricus, in the late phase of the Pyrrhonist tradition, who will be the subject of the next section. But first, just a word about the skeptical Academy. The evidence here is both limited in scope and secondhand – often appearing, in fact, in Sextus (whose own philosophical method leads him to spend a lot of time talking about the thoughts of others). But their use of comedy as a critical tool is nonetheless easy enough to detect.

The skeptical Academics were known for generating opposing arguments on whatever topic one liked. Arcesilaus, the head of the Academy

[18] On this, see Bett 2000a, chapter 3.5.
[19] Xenophanes' critique itself has a humorous aspect; I touch on this at the opening of Section 5.

who first turned it in a skeptical direction, is said by Cicero to have invited his interlocutors to say what they thought; he would then offer arguments against these opinions, and they were invited to defend them as well as possible (*De fin.* 2.2). Now, Cicero does not say that Arcesilaus used humor in his counter-arguments. But he does say that Arcesilaus was reviving the practice of Socrates, and that Socrates' practice, as revealed in Plato's dialogues, was to make fun of the Sophists. Many passages of Plato do of course fit this description, and Socrates himself in Plato's *Apology* is made to say that the reason why he has attracted a following is because listening to those with pretensions to wisdom being shown up as fools is fun (*esti gar ouk aêdes*, 33c4 – elegantly translated by Hugh Tredennick as "an experience which has its amusing side").[20] While we have very little detailed evidence of Arcesilaus' argumentative practice, it is natural to assume that comedic high jinks sometimes made their appearance.

A good example of comedic high jinks comes in a series of sorites arguments about the existence of god attributed by Sextus to Carneades, the second great skeptical Academic, about whom we are somewhat better informed than about Arcesilaus (*M* 9.182–90). Carneades is represented as arguing that if one accepts the existence of various standardly recognized gods, one is forced also to accept to accept the divinity of all sorts of beings that no one in their right mind would regard as such. If Poseidon, standing for the sea, is a god, then major rivers will also be gods (and a number were so regarded); but in that case, every body of water, no matter how small, will be a god. If the sun is a god, then the day is a god; but in that case, any arbitrary time period will be a god. If Eros is a god, so is Pity (who, it is observed, was accepted as a god by some, *M* 9.187); but in that case all the emotions will be gods. If Demeter, Earth, is a god, any stone will be a god.[21] Without clear standards for divinity, the fun one can have making up gods is virtually unlimited, and Carneades is obviously expecting his audience to share in the enjoyment.

It is worth pointing out that sorites arguments, which can be employed in a critical spirit by many philosophers, not just skeptical ones, have an inherent potential for humor. The whole idea is to show that if one accepts a certain starting point, one is forced to accept absurd consequences – and

[20] Tredennick 1969, 66.

[21] The one argument I have omitted exploits the practice of applying epithets to divinities; Carneades proliferates this to what we are clearly supposed to regard as an absurd degree (*M* 9.185). For details, see note *ad loc.* in Bett 2012.

it is not hard for "absurd" to tip over into "laughable" or even "farcical." The same can be said, more generally, of *reductio ad absurdum* arguments, of which sorites arguments are one species. It is notable that the word "absurd" (*atopos*) is ubiquitous in Sextus Empiricus.[22] The absurdities he exposes do not always come with a humorous punch line. But again, the potential for comedy is there, and the potential is not infrequently realized.

IV Sextus Empiricus

Humor in Sextus comes in several forms, sometimes obvious and sometimes subtle. We can perhaps distinguish three kinds of humorous effect in his work, although these are not wholly distinct categories. First, there are cases of outright ridicule or humorous dismissiveness in the language used to describe his dogmatist opponents. Referring to their contribution to a debate on whether sense perception and thought can function together as a criterion of truth, he says that they "run on at the mouth" (*thrulousi*, *M* 7.359). Discussing difficulties with Stoic theories of demonstration (*apodeixis*), he mentions a disagreement within the school on whether arguments with just one premise were possible, and comments that it is silly to reject one-premised arguments on the basis that Chrysippus did not accept them: "For it is not necessary . . . to trust Chrysippus' utterances like deliverances of the Delphic oracle" (*M* 8.443).[23] Raising difficulties for various accounts of how our conception of god originated, he mentions Democritus' idea that we encounter huge human-shaped images that we interpret as divinities, and comments "as for there being huge images in the surrounding area having human form and, in general, the kinds of things Democritus wants to make up for himself (*bouletai hautôi anaplattein*), that is extremely hard to accept" (*M* 9.42). And picturing the state to which his objections to their theories of whole and part have reduced the dogmatic philosophers, he describes them as "securing for themselves a little breather" (*mikran anapnoên porizontes hautois*, *M* 9.352) as they devise a response that will save their position – only temporarily, of course.

Second, there are cases where the consequences for the dogmatists of holding a certain view are described in sardonic or even farcical terms. This

[22] The entry for *atopos* in Janáček 2000 does not attempt to catalog all the instances. Janáček tries whenever possible to give a complete list of the occurrences of significant words, but with *atopos*, he simply says "ub." (i.e., *ubique*, "everywhere") and lists some representative examples.

[23] The text in this sentence is corrupt, but the part that I have quoted is secure, and the general point (delivered in this comedic register) is clear: why trust Chrysippus any more than a member of the same school who maintains the opposite?

includes instances of sorites-type reasoning, as we saw in Sextus' use of Carneades, and in another case (where no source is named) involving the gods; Sextus says that if we suppose that our conception of gods arose from things that benefited human life (a view earlier attributed to Prodicus, *M* 9.18), "we would have to think of human beings, and especially philosophers, as gods (for they benefit our life), and most of the non-rational animals (for they work alongside us), and household utensils and everything more trivial still" (*M* 9.41). Just in case we do not pick up on the tone, he adds, "But this is completely laughable." Commenting on the Stoic view that everyone other than the wise person is ignorant, and that they themselves did not measure up to the wise person's standard, he cheerfully remarks that this puts the Stoics in the same position as they claim the skeptics are in. He does not spell out in general terms what position this is, but I take it to be one where, by one's own admission, one does not have an argumentative leg to stand on; in the Stoics' case, the results are as follows. "For since among the inferior, according to them, are numbered Zeno and Cleanthes and Chrysippus and the rest of their school, and every inferior person is gripped by ignorance, then undoubtedly Zeno was ignorant as to whether he was contained in the universe or whether he himself contained the universe, and whether he was a man or a woman, and Cleanthes did not know whether he was a human being or some beast more crafty than Typhon" (*M* 7.433). The bit on Cleanthes is an allusion to Socrates' self-description in Plato's *Phaedrus* (230a), brought up by Sextus himself earlier in the same book (*M* 7.264). But whereas ignorance was a central and serious element in Socrates' self-conception (at least in Plato's version of him), the Stoics were vastly ambitious and systematic theorists; if *they* are ignorant in the same way, they can only look ridiculous. A more glancing blow, containing wry humor rather than flat-out ridicule, is directed at Aristotle. Discussing Aristotle's view of place as the limit of the containing body, the outermost body being heaven (*ouranos*), which is therefore directly or indirectly the place of everything else, he adds that in that case the heaven itself is not in any place, "but is itself in itself and in its private ownness" (*M* 10.31). Now Aristotle is quite aware that his view leaves heaven as the ultimate place, which is not itself in any other place (*Physics*, 212b22), but he does not use any phrase resembling "private ownness" (*idiai oikeiotêti*), and Sextus is surely making fun of the idea; "itself in itself" (*autos en heautôi*) is also perhaps a crafty dig, the language recalling Plato's terminology for describing separately existing Forms – items that Aristotle is relentlessly critical of Plato for positing.

My third category of humor in Sextus is a kind of exuberance or playfulness in the way an anti-dogmatic argument is developed – especially in the way an example or other detail in the argument is developed. Here it may be more debatable in any given case whether humor is really involved, but I will offer a few cases that seem to me to qualify. In his arguments against the existence of a criterion of truth in the first book of *Against the Logicians*, he considers the idea that human beings are the criterion of truth, and with this, the definition "a human being is a rational mortal animal." One objection to this definition is that it is not a true definition, but merely an enumeration of attributes (*M* 7.269–75). But in the case of "mortal" he goes one better, saying that "mortal" is not even an attribute, "but something that comes after the human being; for when we are human beings, we are alive and not dead" (*M* 7.272). This may seem very feeble; after all, "mortal" means "subject to death" not "actually dead," so that unless one rejects the existence of not yet realized potentialities, someone can of course be mortal while still alive. But I suspect Sextus is playing on the etymological connection between *thnêtos*, "mortal," and *thnêskô*, "die," coupled with a common ambiguity in the force of the adjectival suffix *-tos*. Adjectives with this suffix connote either having undergone a certain process or being in some way able or liable or suitable to undergo that process; so, for example, *anepikritos*, a word often used by Sextus in connection with words such as *diaphônia*, "dispute," can mean either "undecided" or "undecidable" – which way one reads it can sometimes make quite a difference to one's interpretation of Sextus. *Thnêtos* is used only in the second way; it means "able to die," "marked out for death," or the like. But given the regular ambiguity of *-tos*, it might not be hard for a native Greek speaker to hear it in the first way, as "having died"; if so, Sextus' statement becomes a piece of wit as opposed to a mere conceptual ineptitude.

Other examples involve something amusing or preposterous in the scenarios dreamed up to create objections. Near the end of his discussion of motion in the second book of *Against the Physicists*, Sextus is considering the question of whether the places through which things move, and the times during which they move, are infinitely divisible or terminate at minimal units that cannot be further divided. Among the various views on this question, he addresses the view (attributed to the Peripatetic Strato, *M* 10.155) that the distances are infinitely divisible, but the times have minimal, indivisible durations. And his response is that in that case one can construct a scenario in which a falling body would have to stop in mid-air – or else contradict the theory; for added comedic effect Sextus makes

the object something heavy, a lead ball (*M* 10.160–2). Whatever distance the lead ball travels in one of these minimal units of time, one just has to add an extra distance that is a fraction of the first distance. Then either, *per impossibile*, it will cover this extra distance in less than one minimal unit of time or it will have to stand still after covering just the original distance, which is absurd (and here is one of Sextus' frequent uses of *atopos*, 161). He might have added a third possibility – that it abruptly and unaccountably gets slower, so as to cover the smaller distance in the same minimal unit of time; this would only have added to the merriment. A simpler case occurs in *Against the Ethicists*, where Sextus is considering the consequences of saying that the wise person has self-control or continence (*egkrateia*), which the Stoics, unlike Aristotle, regarded as a virtue. The wise and self-controlled person either has impulses toward bad actions but masters them or has no such impulses – and there are problems with either supposition. Against the latter, his response is, where is the self-control in not succumbing to an impulse one does not even have? "And just as no one would call the eunuch self-controlled about sexual intercourse, or the person with a bad stomach self-controlled about the enjoyment of food . . . in the same way the sage should not be described as self-controlled" (*M* 11.212). Part of the humor here is in the sheer incongruity of imagining the eunuch and the person with the queasy stomach fighting against impulses that they obviously do not have; another part is the put-down of the Stoics' wise person implied here – if this is what the wise person is like, wisdom seems more like an impairment than a virtue.

Another example, again from Sextus' treatment of motion in *Against the Physicists*, involves a slightly different kind of humor. He is subjecting to scrutiny the definition of motion as transition from place to place, and one of his complaints is that something can move but stay in the same place. "Imagine a ship," he says, "running with a fair wind, and someone carrying a vertical beam from prow to stern, moving at the same speed as the ship" (*M* 10.56). Presumably Sextus chooses the beam as the focus, rather than the person, because the person's legs will not stay in the same place – whereas the beam, in one sense, stays absolutely stationary, even though in another sense it is clearly moving, since it is being taken from the front of the ship to the back and the person transporting it is putting one foot in front of the other. Now here, the outlandishness of the example certainly brings a chuckle – and I cannot help thinking that this is part of the goal; however, it is not that the example makes the theory under consideration look ridiculous, as in the two cases from the previous paragraph. If anything, the length to which one is forced to go to find a counter-example to

the theory is an indication of the theory's plausibility, even though the counter-example does genuinely make trouble for the theory. The humorous outlandishness of the case puts both points into sharp relief. Yes, the theory was attractive, and yes, it does look vulnerable to this counter-example. The reason one has a laugh in coming to see this is, I suggest, twofold: the example has to be a weird one in order to serve its function, and there is a comic reversal of expectations in the fact that, weird or not, it actually does so.

In both respects, this example recalls contemporary epistemology's Gettier cases, which were designed to undermine a conception of knowledge that had seemed very persuasive, namely, justified true belief.[24] Devising Gettier cases takes real ingenuity, because most everyday cases of knowledge seem to fit that traditional conception quite well; with Gettier cases, then, one enters the realm of the outré and the absurd – and humor is often not far behind. And yet, humor included,[25] they do their work of showing that in order for a belief to count as knowledge (as Gettier cases, in most people's judgment, do not), its justification and its truth must be *connected* with one another in a quite particular way; and the difficulty or impossibility of spelling out that requirement has been a major driver of epistemology's agenda in the past half-century. So both Gettier cases and Sextus' example of motion that is not transition from place to place are indeed instances of humor in a critical context; but the function of the humor is somewhat less direct than in most of the cases I have considered.

I offer one more example of my third category of humor in Sextus. This is from *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, where Sextus argues that dogs are in no way inferior to humans. This is in the first of his Ten Modes, focused on differences in the way things appear to animals and to humans (*PH* 1.40–78). After many examples of such differences, it is argued that there is no non-question-begging means of showing that the way things appear to humans should be considered truer; and this is said to force us to suspend judgment about the way things really are (59–61). And now, to rub in the message (*ek periousias*, 62), Sextus gives numerous reasons why the dog is fully the equal of humanity – in virtue, reasoning power, ability to take care of itself, etc. (63–72). He explicitly marks this as humor

[24] The original Gettier cases were presented in Gettier 1963; many others have been offered since. A good recent discussion of Gettier cases and their influence is Hetherington 2011.

[25] I remember the lecturer from whom I first learned about Gettier cases apologizing for the silliness of these examples. But I now think their silliness – or, to put it less pejoratively, their amusingly bizarre character – is, if not essential to their effect, at least hardly an accident.

(*katapaizein*, 62) directed at the "demented and self-important" (*tetuphômenôn kai periautologountôn*) dogmatists (another instance here of my first category). The humor in Sextus' treatment of the dog rests in part on the fact that the dogmatists are so sure that humans – and especially they themselves – are superior in their discernment of reality; another aspect is the huge gulf between the lowly status of the dog in popular culture, acknowledged by Sextus at the outset (63), and the high praise it receives in Sextus' account; and another is that a good part of the mischief comes from Sextus' exploitation of the dogmatists' own ideas (especially those of the Stoics, singled out as his main opponents, 65). The Stoic Chrysippus is said to have attributed logic to the dog; in chasing another animal, sniffing down two of three possible tracks and failing to pick up the scent, and then pursuing the third track without bothering to sniff, it is employing the syllogism "A or B or C; but not A or B; therefore C," which is a multi-pronged instance of the Stoics' fifth indemonstrable (in other words, foundational) form of argument (69). Again, the Stoics advocate pursuing what conforms to and fosters one's nature, and the dog does just that (65–6). And having argued that the dog has justice, Sextus then appeals to the Stoic doctrine of the unity of the virtues to argue that it must have the other virtues as well (68).

It will perhaps have been noticed that this is the only passage I have cited as a case of humor in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism.*[26] All my other examples have been from Sextus' longer work, the surviving portions of which (*Against the Logicians*, *Physicists*, and *Ethicists*) cover roughly the same material as the second and third books of *Outlines.*[27] Without having done an exhaustive analysis of the topic, I do have the sense that *Outlines* has considerably less overt humor than the other work; certainly I have found examples easier to spot in the other work. I suspect that this difference has to do precisely with the "outline" character of *Outlines*, to which Sextus frequently draws attention; he is here sticking to the bare bones. In the other longer, much more discursive work, there is an opportunity to expand on his points, and this is where humor is more likely to thrive. Nevertheless, some of the examples I have considered perhaps point to a more global propensity toward ridicule behind a great deal of Sextus' writing, and here there is not necessarily a difference

[26] I omit any treatment of Sextus' third work, on the special disciplines (*M* 1–6), since its subject matter is less directly philosophical. However, there is no shortage of humor in this work, and a fuller discussion of the subject would certainly need to include some consideration of it.

[27] Sextus calls this work by the name *Skeptika Hupomnêmata*, *Skeptical Treatises*; see *M* 1.29, 2.106, 6.52, which are clear back-references to passages in these surviving books.

between the two works. The tendency to portray the dogmatists as figures of fun implies a "what is all this nonsense?" attitude toward constructive philosophy in general; and here Sextus' language in *Outlines* – "demented and self-important" – is as stinging as any. The passage on the dog, coming as it does early in the first book of *Outlines*, also sets a tone; after this, one is led to wonder whether dogmatists are ever again to be taken seriously. I do not mean to suggest that Sextus is always on the verge of bursting out laughing. But, as I said, the potential for humor is very often present – as well it might be, given that Sextus considers the claim to have discovered the truth about the world an absurd overreach. Thus I find in Sextus at least a hint of the kind of attitude I detected in Timon: ridicule of positive philosophy as a whole, rather than simply of particular ideas and arguments.

The words "philosophical subversion" in my title are intended to capture both these ideas: subversion of particular ideas within philosophy and subversion of philosophy itself (where the term is understood in a positive or constructive spirit). It is open to the skeptics to be humorously subversive in both these ways, and I hope to have shown that they welcome the opportunity. I will end the chapter with a brief glance at critical humor in some non-skeptical philosophies; here, since they do of course have constructive ambitions, the "subversion" is only of the first kind.

V Non-Skeptical Philosophies

Having already touched on both Plato and Aristotle, I will limit myself in this last section to the Epicureans and Stoics. Still, it is worth noting that a full treatment of the subject would start considerably earlier than even Plato. There is surely an element of ridicule in Xenophanes' critique of the traditional anthropomorphic conception of divinity. If cows had a god, it would be a cow; and different ethnic groups create gods that – surprise, surprise – look just like themselves (Clement, 5.14.109, 3 = DK21B15, 7.4.22, 1 = DK21B16). Heraclitus' invectives, too, contain a sizable dose of mockery. However, constraints of space prevent me from pursuing this any further.

It is easy to suppose that the Epicurean and Stoic schools both produced plenty of works containing little or no humor, and this may be correct. This is the impression I get of the charred remains (among the Herculaneum papyruses) of Epicurus' *On Nature*, as well as of some sentences of Chrysippus quoted in authors such as Plutarch; they seem complicated, verbose, and somewhat forbidding. But our access to these works is, to put

it mildly, extremely limited, and it would no doubt be unfair to make wholesale judgments on the basis of what we have. In any case, we can certainly find examples of humor in later writers of both schools, of whom we have complete works – Lucretius on the Epicurean side and Seneca and Epictetus on the Stoic side. However, we should not dismiss Epicurus too quickly. The letters of Epicurus preserved in Diogenes Laertius are certainly more readable than the fragments of *On Nature*. And while this is by no means frequent, one can find flashes of humor. Perhaps the reason there are not more is that these letters are basic expositions of Epicurean principles, without much concern for criticizing others; for the places where we do find humor are in the relatively rare contexts where criticism occurs.

One is in the *Letter to Menoeceus*, where Epicurus is contrasting the correct view of the pleasant life with a common, but incorrect view; the incorrect view is described as follows. "It is not continuous drinking sessions and revelry, or the enjoyment of boys and women, or of fish and the other things on an extravagant table, that produce the pleasant life" (DL 10.132). This is not laugh-out-loud humor; but there is humorous exaggeration in "continuous" (*suneirontes*), and there is a quizzical perspective implied in lumping together sexual partners and fancy foods as things of which one might – indiscriminately, as it were – have "enjoyments" (*apolauseis*). A slightly more outspoken case comes in the *Letter to Pythocles*, where Epicurus lays into those who explain celestial phenomena not as having multiple possible causes (all consistent with the basic atomic theory) but as having one cause – namely, divine intervention. "To offer one cause for these things," he says, "when the phenomena call for several, is insane and done not as one should by those who eagerly pursue the empty-headed kind of astronomy and offer causes of certain things in vain, when they in no way release the divine nature from public service" (DL 10.113).[28] The abuse is plain, and the final word, "public service" or "liturgies" (*leitourgiôn*), is a nice touch; it conjures up an image of the

[28] τὸ δὲ μίαν αἰτίαν τούτων ἀποδιδόναι, πλεοναχῶς τῶν φαινομένων ἐκκαλουμένων, μανικὸν καὶ οὐ καθηκόντως πραττόμενον ὑπὸ τῶν τὴν ματαίαν ἀστρολογίαν ἐζηλωκότων καὶ εἰς τὸ κενὸν αἰτίας τινῶν ἀποδιδόντων, ὅταν τὴν θείαν φύσιν μηθαμῇ λειτουργιῶν ἀπολύωσι. Bywater's conjecture πλεοναχὰς for the ms. reading πλεοναχῶς may be correct. The language is somewhat crabbed with the text as it stands; one would have to read it as something like "when the phenomena require [them to be explained] in multiple ways." I retain the ms. reading τινῶν, but read it as dependent on αἰτίας, rather than as the subject of a genitive absolute with ἀποδιδόντων (as Inwood and Gerson 1997 read it). Instead of τινῶν, Usener conjectured ἄστρων, "of the stars," and Bignone conjectured τούτων, "of these things." (Hicks' Loeb edition prints τινῶν but translates "for the stars.")

gods as like rich Athenians organizing dramatic festivals, embassies, and the like. In addition, there is an ambiguity in the phrase *eis to kenon* that adds to the fun. It could mean simply "in vain," as I translated it above. But *kenon* is also Epicurus' term for the void, the empty space in which atoms move; and so these misguided astronomers can also be thought of as sending out their explanations "into the void" – or as we might put it colloquially, into thin air, where they will be deservedly forgotten.

Lucretius goes somewhat further in making fun of the misguided. Perhaps the best examples come in book 4, which begins with the physical mechanisms of sense perception and ends with love and sex. On the latter subject, he expands on the comic possibilities of the infatuated lover who interprets any physical feature of his beloved (no matter how objectively undesirable, as Lucretius presents it) as praiseworthy and invents endearing language to describe it (4.1160–9). The conceit goes back to Plato's *Republic* (474d–e), but Lucretius exploits its full potential; both constraints of space and the risk of lapsing into sexism make me hesitate to go into detail, but the satirical purpose is in no doubt. Lucretius continues in the same vein by saying that even if the beloved is really as beautiful as the lover thinks, her beautification regimes behind closed doors would drive him away immediately if he saw them – or, more to the point, smelled them; they make her servants laugh, and we the readers are clearly meant to be in on the laugh too, though the joke is more on the deluded lover than on the scheming beloved (4.1171–84). The section ends on a more humane note: if both parties are honest and accept the truth, they can maybe make a go of it without all this pretense on both sides (4.1188–91). In this case the truth, as Lucretius sees it, is that we are bodies composed of atoms, which, in sex and maybe even in love, undergo processes that can be very pleasurable, but that do not warrant the agonies, ordeals, and resort to theological explanations that they all too frequently generate. Some humor at the expense of those in the grip of such attitudes is all to the good, if it can help to bring people around to this truth.

A not altogether dissimilar kind of humorous critique occurs at the end of book 1 of Seneca's *De ira*, where the opponent is the person who thinks of anger as something noble. If this is the case, argues Seneca, then self-indulgence, avarice, lust, and ambition are also to be celebrated; and the book ends with a series of parodic descriptions of each of these qualities in a mock-positive light; I quote just the first of the four, but they are all equally effective. "If anyone does think that anger makes a great mind manifest, he might think the same about self-indulgence – with its wish to be borne on ivory, dressed in purple, roofed with gold, to transfer whole

plots of land, enclose whole stretches of sea, turn rivers into cascades and a woodland into hanging gardens" (1.21).[29] Here again, there is a common, although thoroughly misguided attitude that needs to be corrected, and comedy is one way to achieve this.

But philosophical attitudes, as well as everyday ones, can also be the subject of critical humor in both Stoic and Epicurean texts. A common butt of Epictetus' jokes in the *Discourses* is the person who is absorbed in the book-learning of philosophy – including, interestingly, the books of the Stoics themselves – but has utterly failed in the real project of philosophy, which is to transform one's life for the better. A good example is book 2, chapter 19, entitled *To* [or perhaps, *Against*] *Those Who Take Up Philosophers' Business Just at the Level of Talk*. Such a person may mouth something read in a book – a Stoic book, say, which holds that the only bad thing is vice, so that a shipwreck, for example, is indifferent rather than bad; how is this person going to do in an actual shipwreck (2.19.15–16)? This is just one of a number of humorous elements in this chapter; Epictetus' caricature of the bookish pseudo-philosopher puts the focus on one of his central themes, the need to do the hard work of self-improvement.

Another philosophical character who comes in for ridicule, both in Epictetus and in Lucretius, is the philosophical skeptic. Since much of this chapter has been about humorous critique issued by skeptics, it is only fair for them to receive some comeuppance; this also allows me to end as I began, since Epicurean and Stoic humor at the expense of skeptics has much in common with Aristotle's humor against the denier of the Law of Non-Contradiction. The picture of a person who literally does not know where he is going (or would not, if he actually believed this nonsense) recurs in both authors; just as Aristotle's opponent might as well fall into a chasm, Lucretius' skeptic might as well fall over a precipice (4.507–10) and Epictetus' skeptic might as well go to the mill when he wants to go to the baths (1.27.19). Such a person (again, if anyone really existed who believed these things) would in fact be reduced to complete inaction; he would be standing on his head according to Lucretius (4.472), and he would be "even worse than a corpse" according to Epictetus (1.5.8), just as in

[29] *Aut si uidetur alicui magnum animum ira producere, uideatur et luxuria – ebore sustineri uult, purpura uestiri, auro tegi, terras transferre, maria concludere, flumina praecipitare, nemora suspendere*. I use the translation of Cooper and Procopé 1995, 41. But the effect is more piquant in the original, with the long sequence of bare nouns and infinitives spelling out what the self-indulgent person wants.

Aristotle the denier of the Law of Non-Contradiction would be no different from a vegetable (*Met.* 1008b11–12).

VI Conclusion

I hope I have done something to make plausible the idea of subversion as a major category of humor in philosophy. Obviously this need not be limited to the ancient period. I mentioned the humorous dimension to Gettier cases. I would also float the suggestion that in certain respects Nietzsche stands to Kant as Timon does to Aristotle; Kant is the rigorously serious philosopher, while Nietzsche is the trickster who makes fun of philosophy as usually practiced (and a great deal besides). Some people treat Nietzsche as a systematic philosopher, but to me the anti-systematic tendencies in his thinking and writing have always loomed larger. And Nietzsche is certainly an enthusiastic exponent of humor. Just one example in closing: I invite you to consider the opening section of *Twilight of the Idols'* "Raids of an Untimely Man," which consists of a number of thumbnail sketches of well-known authors. Among the philosophers in this group are "Seneca: or virtue's bullfighter . . . Kant: or 'cant' [Nietzsche uses the English word] as intelligible character . . . John Stuart Mill: or clarity as an insult."[30] The family resemblance to Timon's sketches of philosophers in the *Silloi* is almost uncanny; and like his, these ones would deserve plenty of unpacking.[31]

[30] I use the translation of Polt in Nietzsche 1997, 50–1.

[31] Thanks to all those who took part in the discussion at the Oslo conference for which this chapter was originally written, especially to my commentator on that occasion, Marko Malink; and to Franco Trivigno and Pierre Destrée for inviting me to contribute. The volume growing out of that and another, associated conference will include a paper by Inger Kuin; I have not seen this paper, but I am told that it addresses the sorts of issues concerning the Cynics and Lucian toward which I gesture in notes 4 and 5.

CHAPTER 4

The Sign in the Pyrrhonian Tradition

Sextus Empiricus discusses signs in two places in his surviving works: in the second book of *Against the Logicians* (*M* 8) and in the second book of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. These discussions have received significant attention from at least two scholars, Theodor Ebert[1] and James Allen,[2] and I am not sure I would have much to add to their insights.[3] My own discussion of the sign in the Pyrrhonian tradition will therefore look in another direction. For Sextus was, of course, only one (and one of the last) of a number of Pyrrhonists, starting with Pyrrho himself, but constituting a recognizable tradition beginning with Aenesidemus some two centuries later. About Pyrrho himself, on this topic, there is little to be said. I shall focus mainly on Aenesidemus and on some significant differences that appear to exist between his treatment of signs and that of Sextus. I shall then close with a few comments about Sextus' own two discussions of signs, and about the order of composition of the two works to which they belong.

I

We have no indications of any discussion of signs among the early Pyrrhonists (by which I mean Pyrrho himself and his immediate followers), and this is not surprising. It is true that Zeno of Citium wrote a book *Peri sêmeiôn* (DL 7.4), and Zeno is among those philosophers satirized in the *Silloi* of Pyrrho's disciple Timon (DL 7.15). Aristotle also has some intriguing remarks on the topic of signs, even if not a fully developed

[1] Ebert 1987, a revised form of which appeared as a chapter of Ebert 1991.

[2] Allen 1993, which was also revised to form a chapter of Allen 2001.

[3] When I first wrote this chapter, Ebert's and (especially) Allen's work on the subject was relatively recent. However, they still stand out as major contributions, and not much attention seems to have been given to these texts in the intervening years – though see Ebert 2005 and Pellegrin 2005, in the same volume where my chapter originally appeared.

theory; and indeed, interest in how to assess the purported evidence for a conclusion dates back at least to the Sophists and medical writers of the late fifth century BC. It would therefore not have been chronologically impossible for the early Pyrrhonists to have reacted to an already existing discourse about signs in earlier Greek philosophy. However, one of the many differences between the early Pyrrhonists and the later thinkers who took Pyrrho as an inspiration was that the early Pyrrhonists in general had little inclination toward theoretical debate on *any* topic. Timon's portrait of Pyrrho (in the *Silloi* and elsewhere) specifically includes, as a point deserving admiration, the fact that Pyrrho did not engage in theoretical inquiry or in arguments with other philosophers;[4] Timon also makes the same point about Philo, another of Pyrrho's immediate followers (DL 9.69). This withdrawal from ongoing philosophical activity appears to be one aspect of the extraordinary tranquility that both Timon and others attributed to Pyrrho. There is some evidence that Timon himself did not entirely maintain this policy; Sextus Empiricus reports a statement by Timon on the subject of hypothesis (*M* 3.1–2) – which he claims appeared in a book called *Pros tous phusikous* – and another on the divisibility of time (*M* 10.197, 6.66). However, a book "against the physicists" need not have consisted in detailed philosophical polemic of the kind that Sextus later included in his own *Against the Physicists*; it might have consisted, instead, of a critique of the enterprise of physics in general. We know from the *Silloi* that Timon relished attacks on theoretical inquiry as such, as well as on individual philosophers. In any case, with the partial or possible exception of Timon, the early Pyrrhonists seem to have deliberately avoided detailed theoretical engagement with their philosophical opponents. Given this policy, then, one would not expect to find the early Pyrrhonists discussing the subject of inferences from signs; the lack of any evidence that they did so is probably no coincidence.

II

Matters are very different when we come to Aenesidemus, the initiator of the later tradition that called itself Pyrrhonism. Our most extensive information about Aenesidemus' ideas and writings derives from a chapter in the *Bibliotheca* of Photius, the ninth-century Patriarch of Constantinople. Photius offers a summary of a work by Aenesidemus in eight books entitled *Purrônioi logoi*, "Pyrrhonist Discourses." It appears that the first

[4] See LS, texts 2B, C, D.

of these books expounded the Pyrrhonist outlook, as Aenesidemus conceived it, in a general way, and this receives by far the greatest portion of Photius' attention. The remaining seven books then tackled various specific topics of philosophical interest, subjecting them to critical analysis in accordance with the Pyrrhonist outlook previously expounded. Photius gives us only a single sentence on each of these books. But it is clear from his brief remarks that they included a considerable amount of criticism of the views of non-Pyrrhonists on the topics in question; in four out of these seven cases, Photius is explicit that Aenesidemus attacked his opponents' views, and it is highly plausible that this was true in the other cases as well. Unlike Pyrrho himself, then, Aenesidemus is happy to engage in philosophical debate. And among the subjects on which he contributed to such debate was that of the sign; the fourth book of *Purrônioi logoi*, says Photius, was devoted to this subject. Here is what Photius tells us about the contents of this book:

> In the fourth book he asserts, on the one hand, that signs (in the sense that we call things that are clear signs of things that are unclear) do not exist at all, and that those who think they do exist are deceived by a vain attraction; on the other hand, he stirs up the customary series of difficulties about nature as a whole, the cosmos, and gods, insisting that none of them falls within our apprehension. (170b12 17)[5]

There is one point to be noted about the translation of this sentence. The second half of the sentence begins *egeirei de tas ex ethous ephexês aporias*. Now, René Henry[6] translates these words "il suscite *ensuite* à nouveau les difficultés habituelles," apparently taking *ephexês* as a connective; the English translation of Inwood and Gerson[7] is similar in this respect ("he brings up *next* the puzzles . . ."). However, it is clear that the word *ephexês* is internal to the phrase *tas ex ethous ephexês aporias* and cannot be detached from it; the correct translation of this phrase is "the customary *series of* difficulties,"[8] where *ephexês* draws attention to the fact that these standard difficulties are arranged in order, one after the other. This is clearly Photius' own editorial comment on the character of these *aporiai*; to his way of thinking, they are predictable and unoriginal.

The correct reading of *ephexês* affects our reading of the entire sentence. If *ephexês* is mistakenly understood as a connective ("ensuite," "next"), this makes it look as if the fourth book contained two separate and possibly

[5] I accept Sedley's supplement <*tou*>*tôn* at 170b16; see LS vol. 2, 473. The manuscript reading *tôn* is surely impossible.
[6] Henry 1962. [7] Inwood and Gerson 1997, 302. [8] As translated by LS, vol. 1, 483.

unrelated topics – *first* signs, *then* difficulties about nature. However, if *ephexês* is returned to its correct place within the phrase referring to the *aporiai*, then the two parts of the sentence are connected simply by *men* and *de*.[9] And in this case, it is far more likely that these two topics were treated as distinct but complementary aspects of a single topic. This is suggested by the remainder of Photius' summary of Aenesidemus' work; every other book, according to this summary, has a unified subject matter, so it would be surprising if the fourth book dealt with two separate and unrelated topics. But it is also suggested by the *men–de* construction itself, which surely implies a connection, and not merely a contrast, between the two parts of the sentence. *Men* and *de* typically draw attention to a contrast of some kind, but a contrast between aspects of a single situation, or between objects that one might reasonably expect to be related to one another. Now, if this is correct, we have a clue as to the character of Aenesidemus' arguments against signs; they were in some way connected with a series of arguments against the possibility of apprehension (*katalêpsis*) of nature. This point will be of some significance in what follows.

Photius' reference to Aenesidemus' arguments against signs immediately raises two questions. First, the claim that Aenesidemus said that signs "do not exist at all" (*oud'holôs einai*) is surprising from the point of view of the later Pyrrhonism familiar to us from most of the works of Sextus Empiricus.[10] As Sextus presents the Pyrrhonist outlook, the result of skeptical argument is supposed to be suspension of judgment about the existence or the nature of the objects discussed, not active *denial* of their existence. Indeed, Sextus emphasizes, in both his discussions of signs, that the purpose of any arguments he may deploy against signs is not to establish their non-existence but to create a body of argument to balance the

[9] Indeed, the presence of *men* and *de* is a further reason for denying that *ephexês* has the status of a connective; the two parts of the sentence are already connected, and a further connective, unrelated to *men* and *de*, would be both unnecessary and linguistically odd.

[10] The word *holôs* ("do not exist *at all*") suggests that Aenesidemus may be replying to someone who had argued that signs did exist, albeit in some limited domain. (This is also suggested by the negative *oud'* instead of *ouch*'; a more precise translation might perhaps be "signs *do not even* exist at all," which again implies a contrary position to which Aenesidemus is responding.) One thinks naturally of Philo of Larissa, who must in any case be among the contemporary Academics singled out by Aenesidemus for special criticism (170a14–15). Philo argued for a qualified acceptance of *katalêpsis*; for the details of Philo's view, see Brittain 2001, esp. chapter 3. While *katalêpsis* may not itself be a species of sign, it is not implausible that someone who accepted the existence of *katalêpsis* would also have accepted the existence of signs. I owe these suggestions to Carlos Lévy and Daniel Delattre.

arguments *for* the existence of signs employed by his Dogmatist opponents (*M* 8.159–61, *PH* 2.103), leaving the reader in a condition of *epochê* on this subject. How, then, are we to understand Aenesidemus' apparently very different approach to the topic? Second, Sextus insists (again, in both of the examinations of signs in his surviving works) that there are two kinds of signs, the indicative and the commemorative, and that his critique applies to the indicative sign only. The commemorative sign, he claims, is the common property of both the skeptics and ordinary non-philosophical people; indeed, this is one of the places in which he claims, in a manner reminiscent of the later Wittgenstein, that the skeptics are the supporters of an ordinary non-philosophical outlook and the opponents of philosophical abstraction as represented by the Dogmatists. But Sextus' distinction between a type of sign to which he subjects his skeptical critique, and another type of sign which he is happy to accept, appears to be quite different from Aenesidemus' blanket opposition to signs in general. The question therefore arises as to whether there was a disagreement, or a change of view, within the Pyrrhonist tradition on this topic. Answering these questions will require a more general examination of the nature of Aenesidemus' skepticism, as compared with that of Sextus. I begin with the first question.

III

Why, then – if we are to believe Photius – did Aenesidemus argue against the existence of signs altogether, instead of producing a condition of *epochê* about them? One possible answer, of course, is that Photius misrepresents him. It is no doubt true that Aenesidemus' discussion of signs largely consisted of arguments against their existence; this is certainly true of Sextus' discussions of signs. However, as the example of Sextus illustrates, this by no means shows that the intention was to establish their non-existence. Perhaps Photius simply neglected or misunderstood the fact that the real purpose was to use these arguments as a counter-balance to the Dogmatists' arguments, thereby producing suspension of judgment. Or perhaps Aenesidemus himself was not clear enough about this.

Clearly, in the current state of our evidence, it would be impossible to prove this hypothesis false. However, there are strong reasons for thinking that Photius was not mistaken, and that Aenesidemus really did mean to establish the non-existence of signs. First, the emphatic tone of Photius' report is striking; Aenesidemus "asserts . . . that signs . . . do not exist at all,

and that those who think they do exist are deceived by a vain attraction." (One might compare Sextus' prefatory comment about his own arguments (*PH* 2.103); he will argue against signs, he says, "*not* in eagerness to show that the . . . sign is entirely non-existent," which is virtually the opposite of what Photius attributes to Aenesidemus.) If Aenesidemus' real goal was to cause us to suspend judgment about the existence of signs, it would be surprising that he left Photius with the impression that he had vigorously denied their existence. Photius' summary appears to be the product of careful reading. The outline of Aenesidemus' position as expounded in the first book includes a considerable amount of nuance and detail; moreover, his summaries of works by other authors, where it is sometimes possible for us to compare his words with the original, suggests that he is in general a reliable reporter of other people's ideas.[11] So one would not expect him to make such a gross error in his interpretation of the fourth book. But still, such reflections are bound to be inconclusive. The more compelling reason for believing that Aenesidemus did indeed *deny* the existence of signs is that this is just one example of a frequent pattern. It looks as if there was a stage in the history of Pyrrhonism – a stage that it is plausible to associate with Aenesidemus – in which denial of the existence of various entities, rather than suspension of judgment about their existence, was the standard procedure.

First, Photius himself reports two other cases in which Aenesidemus argued that a certain item postulated by non-Pyrrhonist philosophers does not exist. In the fifth book, we are told, Aenesidemus launched an attack on causal theories, "not conceding that anything is the cause of anything, and maintaining that those who posit causes are mistaken, and enumerating the Modes according to which he thinks that, by being led to posit causes, they have been brought into such error" (170b18–22). The "Modes" (*tropous*) to which Photius refers are presumably the Eight Modes against the causal theorists that Sextus, too, attributes to Aenesidemus (*PH* 1.180–5). Sextus gives us only a very brief description of each of these Modes; but it is clear from his account that, uniquely among the various sets of Modes that Sextus outlines in *PH* I – but precisely as Photius' report suggests – these Eight Modes consist of a catalogue of *mistakes* that the causal theorists are supposed to have committed, rather than a series of arguments by means of which the skeptic is said to induce suspension of judgment. According to Photius, then, Aenesidemus denies that there

[11] On this point, see Janáček 1976.

is any such thing as a cause, and Sextus' account of the Eight Modes seems to confirm this. In addition, Photius tells us that Aenesidemus attacked the notion of the end (*telos*) in ethics, alleging that "the end that everyone celebrates *simply does not exist*" (*haplôs ouk einai telos to pasin humnoumenon*, 170b34–5). Again, we are presented not with suspension of judgment about whether there is an ethical end, or what it might be, but a categorical denial that there is any such thing; and, as in the case of signs, Photius' language suggests that this denial was especially forthright and emphatic.

Of course, if we had only Photius to rely on, we might wonder whether he has systematically misunderstood Aenesidemus' intentions; if so, three examples are no more reliable than one. I have tried to indicate why I think this is unlikely; but clearly Photius' testimony cannot establish its own veracity. However, other authors provide evidence of precisely the same kinds of argument within the Pyrrhonist tradition, even if they do not tie them specifically to the name of Aenesidemus. Diogenes Laertius, too, reports several Pyrrhonist arguments to the effect that things of a certain kind do not exist. Signs are a prominent example; Diogenes' report of Pyrrhonist arguments concerning this topic begins "the sign does not exist" (*sêmieon t'ouk einai*, 9.96) – just what one would expect from Photius' summary of Aenesidemus' fourth book. But Diogenes also says that, on the Pyrrhonist view, motion (9.99), coming-into-being (*genesis*, 9.100), and the good and bad by nature (9.101) do not exist. In addition, he tells us that the Pyrrhonists "did away with" (*anêiroun*) various items – the criterion (9.94), causes (9.97), and learning (9.100) – and this appears to mean the same thing; the report on the Pyrrhonist critique of causes begins "they do away with causes as follows" and ends "therefore there is no such thing as cause" (9.99). Diogenes, then, like Photius, suggests that the Pyrrhonist approach to signs was to deny their existence, and that this was just one example of a widespread Pyrrhonist approach.

This may still seem far from conclusive. It is well known that Diogenes is not the most philosophically acute author; and it might be suggested that Diogenes too, like Photius, has simply misconstrued the Pyrrhonists' true intention. Again, it is no doubt true that the Pyrrhonists devised arguments against the existence of signs, and against the existence of many other things; but it does not follow that their purpose was to establish the conclusions of those arguments. What settles the issue, I believe, and confirms that both Diogenes and Photius did after all report Aenesidemus' and the Pyrrhonists' intentions correctly, is the evidence of Sextus Empiricus himself.

One book of Sextus, namely, *Against the Ethicists*, differs from all the others in that it conforms to the pattern suggested by Photius and Diogenes.[12] It tackles the subject of the good and the bad, and instead of attempting to induce suspension of judgment about whether there are any such things, it argues for the definite conclusion that there are *no* such things. And in this case it is not possible to argue (as some scholars have tried to argue) that Sextus' negative arguments are intended to be balanced with the positive arguments of the dogmatists, with a view to suspension of judgment. For the definite conclusion that nothing is by nature good or bad is several times said to be something that is essential to the skeptic's attainment of *ataraxia*. Sextus tells us that "When *reason has established* that none of these things is by nature good or by nature bad, there will be a release from disturbance and a peaceful life will await us" (*M* 11.130), and the same point is repeated in two other places (118, 140). The skeptic's *ataraxia* depends, then, not on suspending judgment about whether anything is by nature good or bad but on coming to *accept* that *nothing* is by nature good or bad. Sextus, then, provides clear evidence of a phase of the Pyrrhonist tradition in which arguing for definite conclusions of the form "X does not exist" was an important part of the Pyrrhonists' approach. Photius and Diogenes therefore need not be accused of misunderstanding the Pyrrhonist strategy; on the contrary, they can now be seen to provide valuable evidence of a stage in the history of Pyrrhonism distinct from that represented in most of the writings of Sextus.

To return, then, to the topic of signs, the position so far is this. Despite our initial suspicions, there is good reason to believe that Aenesidemus did indeed argue, as Photius reports, that "signs . . . do not exist at all." By the time Sextus writes about signs, the Pyrrhonist practice has changed to that of bringing about a condition of *epochê* with regard to the existence of signs. But this is simply one example of a more general transformation of Pyrrhonism that occurred at some time between Aenesidemus and Sextus – although, as we just saw, the earlier Pyrrhonist position still survives as a relic in one book of Sextus. Nonetheless, it was entirely possible for many of the same arguments to be used in both periods. Diogenes' brief report of the Pyrrhonist position on signs (9.96–7) includes several lines of

[12] The interpretation of *Against the Ethicists* offered in this paragraph is argued for in much more detail in Bett 1997; see also Bett 2000a, chapter 4.3. This interpretation has been challenged by Machuca 2011; see also Morison 2014, section 4.2. But to my mind, no one has adequately responded to the crucial point in the present paragraph. For more general challenges to my reading of Aenesidemus, see Schofield 2007; Polito 2014; Castagnoli 2018.

argument, almost all of which are echoed, even at the level of verbal similarities, in Sextus' treatment of the subject. But in Diogenes' account, as we saw, these arguments are directed toward the conclusion that there is no such thing as a sign, whereas in Sextus the aim is to suspend judgment on this question. However, there is nothing surprising in this. The Pyrrhonists were always happy to turn the arguments of others to their own ends; there is no reason why such a transformation of purpose should not have occurred within the Pyrrhonist tradition as well.

IV

Let us turn now to the second main question that I raised earlier. What are we to make of Aenesidemus' apparent opposition to signs in general, compared with Sextus' distinction between two types of signs and his acceptance of one of these two types, the commemorative sign, for the skeptic's own use? A satisfactory answer to this question will depend on our achieving some degree of clarity about the nature of Aenesidemus' arguments. Given the state of the evidence, this will obviously not be easy; however, I will try to show that some tentative conclusions are possible.

Recall my comments about the relations between the two parts of Photius' sentence summarizing Aenesidemus' fourth book. Photius mentions two topics for this book: first signs, second a series of difficulties about our ability to apprehend the nature of things. And his mention of these two topics is connected by means of the particles *men* and *de*, suggesting that they formed contrasting aspects of a single discussion, rather than being wholly unconnected – something that one would in any case expect, given that all of the other books of Aenesidemus' *Purrônioi logoi* appear to have been unified in subject matter. If I am right about this, then it is at least tempting to infer that Aenesidemus' arguments against the existence of signs had something to do with difficulties in apprehending the real natures of things. This would be in no way surprising. The impossibility of "apprehension" (*katalêpsis*) is a recurring theme in Photius' summary. And the kinds of things that, we are told, it is impossible to "apprehend" are precisely the kinds of things that, in the ancient Greek context at least, would be expected to be part of the real nature of things: motion, generation and destruction, causes, and things good and bad, preferred and dispreferred.

Moreover, there is reason to believe that the term *katalêpsis* itself, in Aenesidemus' usage, refers precisely to a grasp of how things are in their real nature. In his more lengthy summary of Aenesidemus' first book,

Photius emphasizes that the Pyrrhonists do not make statements "unambiguously" (*anamphibolôs*). They are willing to make statements that are qualified by relativities – statements to the effect that an object has some feature *in certain circumstances* or *in a certain respect*; but they refuse to make any statements that attribute features to things *invariably* or *unequivocally*, and they criticize their dogmatic opponents for doing so. But now, there was a common ancient conception according to which a thing's *nature* comprises just those features that belong to it in this invariable or unqualified way. In *Against the Ethicists* – a work that, as I have suggested, is strongly indebted to Aenesidemus' style of thinking – Sextus argues in precisely this manner about things good by nature; nothing is by nature good, he says, because nothing is good invariably or without qualifications. It is thus plausible to interpret Aenesidemus' refusal to make statements "unambiguously" as a refusal to specify the true nature of things. But, as mentioned a minute ago, the other point on which Aenesidemus insists is that *katalêpsis* is beyond our reach; and this seems to be connected with his withholding of all "unambiguous" statements. So it appears that, as he is conceiving the matter, *katalêpsis* (if we could have it) would be the ability to discern the "unambiguous" features of things – that is, the features that belong to the natures of those things; since we cannot have *katalêpsis*, "unambiguous" statements are to be avoided. Photius reports Aenesidemus as saying that the Pyrrhonist *knows* (*eidenai*) that he has firm *katalêpsis* of nothing (169b28–9). If we believe Photius at this point, Aenesidemus is willing to allow a certain species of knowledge, signified by *eidenai*; what he is not willing to allow is *katalêpsis*. So *katalêpsis* is something above and beyond knowledge of an everyday variety; that this superior form of knowledge is knowledge of the true nature of things is at least an attractive hypothesis.

Aenesidemus, then, has much to say about our inability to "apprehend" things (*katalambanein*); and it looks as if this refers specifically to our inability to penetrate to the *nature* of things. But since an inquiry into the nature of things, if it were possible, is precisely the kind of inquiry that one would expect to proceed by means of signs (understood by Aenesidemus as "clear" indications of states of affairs that are "unclear"), it would be in no way be unexpected if his denial of the existence of signs in the fourth book were to center around this very inability. And since, as we know from Photius, the fourth book did in any case contain a discussion of our inability to "apprehend" nature in general, the idea that his arguments against signs had to do with this inability becomes not only possible but probable.

Photius is not the only author to give us clues as to the character of Aenesidemus' treatment of signs. In the course of his own treatment of signs, Sextus cites what he claims to be an argument from Aenesidemus' fourth book. The citation occurs twice (*M* 8.215, 234), and the wording is not absolutely identical in both places; but the differences are trivial and of no significance for the nature of the reasoning. We can hardly doubt that Sextus has given us something very close to Aenesidemus' actual words. Here is what Aenesidemus is said to have argued (I translate the first of Sextus' two citations):

> If apparent things appear in like manner to all who are similarly disposed, and signs are apparent things, then signs appear in like manner to all who are similarly disposed. But signs do *not* appear in like manner to all who are similarly disposed; yet apparent things do appear in like manner to all who are similarly disposed; therefore signs are not apparent things.

The conclusion of this argument certainly seems to follow from the premises. The difficult questions are how one should interpret the premises, whether they are plausible and free from equivocation, and more generally, what the purpose and the background assumptions of the argument may have been.

Sextus offers us some clues here, explaining each of the premises in his own words. Now, as Victor Brochard pointed out,[13] in one place it looks as if Sextus may be attempting to transform Aenesidemus' argument into terms more familiar to himself, when he says (*M* 8.216) that by "apparent things" (*phainomena*) Aenesidemus appears to mean what Sextus himself calls "perceptible things" (*aisthêta*). But in general Sextus' explanations seem to make good sense of the argument, in the terms in which he reports it; it seems safe enough, therefore, to take them as accurately reflecting Aenesidemus' original aim. And his most helpful explanation concerns the premise "signs do not appear in like manner to all who are similarly disposed." The point here is, he says, that the very same symptoms may be regarded by different medical experts as signs of quite different bodily conditions; what Herophilus regards as a sign of healthy blood, Erasistratus regards as a sign of a transfer of blood from the veins to the arteries, and Asclepiades regards as a sign of "lodging of intelligible masses in intelligible interstices" (*M* 8.220). To say, then, that "signs do not appear in like manner to all who are similarly disposed" is to say that signs do not strike

[13] Brochard 2002, 280.

everyone (even everyone whom we may assume to be "similarly disposed") as signs *of the same things*.

Why is this supposed to show that signs are not "apparent things"? An example of something that is "apparent," Sextus tells us, is whiteness (221) – the whiteness of a wall or a glass of milk, let us say. And, he continues, what it means for the whiteness to be "apparent" is for it to strike everyone "similarly disposed" in the same way. The wall or the milk might appear other than white to someone in an unusual physical condition; but to all those in a normal physical condition it appears white – and this is something that is simply given in the experience of observing it. It is the contrast with this kind of uncontroversial case that is supposed to yield the conclusion that signs are not "apparent things." It is *not* simply given in the experience of observing (for example) a person's flushed face that the person is in any particular medical condition; if this were simply given, then there would be no disagreement among the doctors about what a flushed face signifies. Signs are not "apparent things," then, because *the fact that* they are signs, and *what* they are signs of, is not directly and uncontroversially observable.

As James Allen has acutely explained,[14] this argument depends on an unstated assumption. For there is an obvious sense in which, if there are signs, they are indeed "apparent things." That is, the very concept of a sign is, to put it very broadly, that of a state of affairs which is not itself in doubt, and which licenses an inference to the existence of another, less obvious state of affairs. Typically, the state of affairs that is the sign will be a phenomenon observable with the senses, and the state of affairs of which it is the sign will be a set of facts about the world that are unobservable, at least in current circumstances. But it will always be true, concerning the state of affairs that is the sign, that there is no need of any inference or other process of reasoning to establish its existence; that is just what it means to be a sign, as opposed to something signified. And in that sense signs are necessarily "apparent" – that is, manifest, as opposed to needing to be known about in some indirect way. But to say this is not at all the same as to say that they are apparent *qua signs*. To return to the previous example, it may be apparent, in the sense just described, that a person's face is flushed; this fact may be immediately observable to all who are capable of seeing colors in the normal way. However, to say that it is apparent that the face is flushed is not equivalent to saying that it is

[14] Allen 2001, 129.

apparent that the flushed face is a sign of a certain medical condition. So in order for Aenesidemus to infer from the disagreement about the medical significance of the flushed face to the fact that signs are not apparent, he must be operating with an additional assumption. The assumption is that, *if* signs were apparent, then included in what is apparent about them would be the fact that they are signs and what they are signs of – or, as Allen puts it, that "their semeiotic content must be part of their phenomenal content." Their character *as signs* – and as *signs of some particular state of affairs* – must itself be part of what is immediately observable; not just the flushed face, but the condition of which the flushed face is a sign, must be "apparent" if we are to consider the sign itself as "apparent." If this assumption is allowed, then, of course, the conclusion that signs are not "apparent things" seems irresistible. And since, as noted earlier, signs must in an intuitive sense be "apparent" if they are to qualify as signs at all, it is easy to see how this argument might have been thought to favor the general conclusion for which, according to Photius, Aenesidemus was aiming – namely, that there is no such thing as a sign.

The assumption just uncovered may well strike us as highly implausible. Allen offers some very ingenious suggestions about the historical and philosophical context in which such an assumption by Aenesidemus (and similar assumptions in parts of Sextus' own treatment of signs) might have seemed attractive.[15] However, my purpose here is to try to see what light this analysis of Aenesidemus' argument may shed on the matter raised earlier: that is, the way in which Aenesidemus and Sextus seem to differ, Sextus accepting the commemorative sign and Aenesidemus rejecting signs altogether. I shall suggest that the clues that we have found concerning the nature of Aenesidemus' reasoning indicate that the commemorative sign, the type of sign that Sextus accepts for the skeptic's own use, would not have fallen within the scope of Aenesidemus' arguments. What Aenesidemus speaks of as signs are what Sextus calls indicative signs, the kind of signs that he attacks. We have no evidence that Aenesidemus made use of the distinction between the two types of signs; it seems most likely that indicative signs, in Sextus' terminology, are for Aenesidemus signs *tout court*. If this is correct, then the contrast between Aenesidemus and Sextus is one of taxonomy rather than substance.

[15] Allen 2001, 130–9.

V

Recall the two points that we have extracted concerning Aenesidemus' treatment of signs. First, the arguments that he employed against the existence of signs are likely to have centered around the obstacles to achieving a secure grasp of the nature of things. And second, at least one of these arguments relies on a conception of signs (if they did exist) as exhibiting in plain view their character as signs. These two features both bear a striking resemblance to features of Sextus' portrayal of indicative signs.

Sextus associates indicative signs with the discovery of things that are, in his terminology, "naturally non-evident" (*phusei adêla*, *M* 8.151, *PH* 2.99); by contrast, commemorative signs are employed, typically at least, for the discovery of things that are "temporarily non-evident" (*pros kairon adêla*). His favorite example of the latter is fire, of which smoke may be a commemorative sign. Fire is not inherently invisible; but in many circumstances our view of a fire may be cut off, and in such cases the smoke rising from the fire can serve to inform us of it. It does so because we have often observed both fire and smoke together; this observed correlation is what allows us the recognition that there is a fire on the current occasion. But indicative signs (if they exist) are to be used to inform us of the existence or the activities of things that are, by their very nature, *not* such as to reveal themselves to direct observation; indicative signs are not reminders of previously observed correlations, but means for inferring the existence of types of objects or states of affairs that have never been observed. In other words, indicative signs are supposed to be means for the discovery of the underlying nature of things; among the examples furnished by Sextus are the soul (of whose movements bodily movements are supposed to be an indicative sign), "intelligible pores" (*noêtoi poroi*), and the indefinite void outside the cosmos. These are the kinds of things that Sextus constantly criticizes the Dogmatists for claiming to have discovered; it is not surprising, then, that the indicative sign is the one against which he directs his critique. The commemorative sign, on the other hand, has nothing to do with discovering the underlying nature of things. Smoke can be a commemorative sign of the fact that a fire is burning – a fact that, if one was in a different position, one would be able to see directly; it cannot tell us anything about the real nature of fire, or about *why* fire and smoke go together, or about anything else concerning the underlying nature of things. So if, as Photius' report suggests, Aenesidemus' arguments against the existence of signs were associated with "the customary series of

difficulties about nature as a whole, the cosmos, and gods," and about our capacity for "apprehension" (*katalêpsis*) of these things, then it looks as if the commemorative sign was no part of Aenesidemus' conception of signs.

Sextus also tells us that the indicative sign is supposed to signify "by means of its own nature and constitution" (*ek tês idias phuseôs kai kataskeuês*, *M* 8.154, *PH* 2.101). The signifying power of the indicative sign, then, is somehow built into the sign itself. But now, since a sign is by its very nature an observable phenomenon, it is hard to see what this can mean other than that the information conveyed by the sign is itself discernible in the very act of observation. For example, the activities of the soul are discernible in the very nature of the bodily movements that are said to be indicative signs of those activities; the bodily movements convey on their face the psychic movements of which they are the sign. This is confirmed by a further comment that appears in *M* 8, but not in the parallel treatment in *PH* 2: the indicative sign, Sextus says, is said to signify that of which it is a sign "all but giving voice" (*monon ouchi phônên aphien*). This is no doubt a rhetorical flourish, but it makes explicit what is already implicit in the words "by means of its own nature and constitution"; indicative signs are supposed to "speak" to us directly – that is, to reveal to us the facts of which they are signs purely by means of our observation of the signs themselves. But now, this is precisely the assumption that seemed to underlie the argument reproduced by Sextus from Aenesidemus' fourth book. So again, it appears that the signs attacked by Aenesidemus conform to Sextus' characterization of the indicative sign specifically.

A further comparison with the commemorative sign will confirm the point. Commemorative signs, as the name suggests, are said to work by means of recollection (*hupomnêsis*); one sees smoke, and one is thereby led to a recollection of that which one has regularly observed in conjunction with smoke – namely, fire. And it is clear from Sextus' presentation in both *M* 8 and *PH* 2 that this process of recollection is to be understood as *contrasted* with the mechanism of the indicative sign, which conveys its information "by means of its own nature and constitution" (*M* 8.152–5, *PH* 2.100–1). To say, then, that commemorative signs operate by means of recollection is precisely to say that they do *not* contain within themselves some inherent signifying power; they serve as signs because of the objects with which they have been observably associated in the past, not because they "speak" to us in and of themselves. In some cases, indeed, this is obvious. Sextus tells us that some commemorative signs are purely conventional. A torch placed in a certain position, or a bell rung at a certain

time, might serve as a sign for many different things; it is entirely up to those who establish the norms in any given society (*M* 8.193, 200). Clearly there is no question in these cases of the sign having an inherent signifying capacity. But even in the case of those commemorative signs that would seem to qualify as natural rather than conventional – such as the case of smoke as a commemorative sign of fire – the sign's ability to function as a sign depends on our recollection of correlations, not on anything inherent in the sign itself. Smoke does not indicate the presence of fire "by means of its own nature and constitution"; it does so because we have often observed smoke and fire together. Commemorative signs, then, are described by Sextus in such a way as to emphasize that they do not have the feature that Aenesidemus seemed to attribute to signs in general, and that Sextus does incorporate into his conception of an indicative sign.

To repeat, almost any conclusions about Aenesidemus' treatment of signs are bound to be speculative. However, if the indications furnished by Photius and Sextus are to be trusted, it looks as if what Aenesidemus was talking about under the heading of "sign" was something much closer to what Sextus calls indicative signs than to what he calls commemorative signs. Indeed, signs as Aenesidemus understood them seem to have had precisely the features that, in Sextus' discussion, *distinguish* indicative signs from commemorative signs; what Sextus calls commemorative signs are in crucial respects incompatible with Aenesidemus' conception of signs. If this is correct, then it is probably correct to suppose, as scholars generally have supposed, that the adoption of the commemorative sign in the Pyrrhonist tradition postdates Aenesidemus. But the fact that Sextus, unlike Aenesidemus, is willing to speak of the skeptic's approval of commemorative signs does not indicate that the Pyrrhonists changed their minds in any fundamental way; it merely indicates that they later included under the term "sign" a broader group of phenomena than was covered under Aenesidemus' conception.[16]

VI

Despite the fact the commemorative sign clearly differs from the indicative sign, and from the sign in general as Aenesidemus appears to have

[16] Daniel Delattre pointed out that what Philodemus (Aenesidemus' rough contemporary) includes under the term "sign" in his *De signis* also seems to be only the type of sign called indicative by Sextus. This is perhaps a further indication that the notion of commemorative signs, in the hands either of the Pyrrhonists or of others, came only later.

conceived it, it is surprising to find Sextus accepting any kind of sign for the skeptic's own use, and scholars have sometimes questioned whether it is legitimate for him to do so. I shall offer a few remarks on this topic, and then a few observations about the order of composition of Sextus' two treatments of the subject of signs.

The central issue concerning Sextus' adoption of the commemorative sign is whether doing so involves him in dogmatic commitments. It seems clear that, if he is to avoid such commitments, the commemorative sign cannot be understood, in his hands, as any kind of logical inference (whether inductive or deductive). And it seems equally clear that the way in which Sextus intends to avoid the accusation of engaging in logical inference again has to do with the role of memory. Smoke serves as a commemorative sign of fire because, in seeing smoke, one is *reminded* of fire. Now it sounds strange, of course, to suggest that one is reminded of a fire which (ex hypothesi) one has never seen. However, as suggested earlier, this is described as a process of recollection because it works by means of one's frequent *previous* observation of smoke together with fire; given the regular past correlation of smoke and fire, the present observation of smoke (alone) causes one to be aware that there is a fire. But Sextus is not suggesting that one engages in a process of *reasoning*: "There is smoke; smoke is regularly correlated with fire; therefore there is a fire." Rather, the process is purely *causal*. The frequent past observation of smoke correlated with fire has caused a mental association to develop, such that the observation of smoke immediately brings to mind the idea of fire – just as a view of Paris might remind me (in an entirely non-inferential way) of a person with whom I had once visited this city.

In introducing the commemorative sign, including this process, Sextus uses the unusual word *ananeousthai*, literally, to "renew" (*M* 8.152–3). The same word occurs in a similar context later in the book (*M* 8.288), where Sextus says that human beings remember the things that they have observed in correlation with one another. From this prior experience, he continues, a person "renews (*ananeoutai*) the rest"; that is, on observing one member of a previously correlated pair, one recalls the other member of the pair. The word "renew" makes clear that this is not a matter of reasoning toward a conclusion not previously arrived at; on the contrary, all that one is doing is reactivating something that is, in a clear sense, already in one's mind. And the phrase Sextus uses, in the same passage, for our capacity to do this is *têrêtikên tina akolouthian*, literally, "a sort of observational consequence." The point is that one does not engage in any process of reasoning involving "consequence" (*akolouthia*) in a *logical*

sense; rather, one's awareness of some object (for example, fire) results from, or is a consequence (*akolouthia*) of, one's observation (*têrêsis*) of another object (for example, smoke) in conjunction with one's previous observation of the two together. These "observations," and the patterns of mental association that they cause to become embedded in our minds, are what enable the skeptic to dispense with the operations of rationality as the Dogmatists conceive it. The process is highly reminiscent of the *biôtikê têrêsis*, the "observance of ordinary life" (*PH* 1.23) by which Sextus claims quite generally that the skeptic may direct his activities.

Many other questions may be raised about Sextus' use of the commemorative sign. For example, is he entitled to insist, as he does, that in favoring the commemorative sign and opposing the indicative sign he is supporting the practices of ordinary life against the abstractions of the Dogmatists? There are also complicated historical questions about the origins of this distinction between two types of sign, and about the relation between its original purpose and the purpose for which Sextus employs it. Here the work of Allen, Ebert, and others has shed much valuable light. But rather than attempting to pursue any of these topics, I will close with a very brief comment on the relative chronology of Sextus' two discussions of signs.

The conventional view is that Sextus wrote *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* first, and that the composite work that includes *Against the Logicians*, *Against the Physicists*, and *Against the Ethicists* represents a revised and expanded version of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. However, it was long ago argued by Robert Philippson that Sextus' treatment of signs in *Against the Logicians* precedes his treatment of the same topic in *Outlines*; in Philippson's view, the treatment in *Against the Logicians* suffers from numerous defects that the treatment in *Outlines* corrects.[17] More recently Theodor Ebert has offered a similar verdict on the relative merits of the two discussions;[18] Ebert has pointed to many respects in which the treatment in *Against the Logicians* is clumsier and less polished than the treatment in *Outlines* – so that on this topic at least, it is the discussion in *Outlines* that looks like a revised version of the one in *Against the Logicians*. But instead of the conclusion that one might expect, Ebert concludes that the unknown work that was the *source* of Sextus' treatment of signs in *Against the Logicians* was written before the other unknown work that was the *source* of his treatment of signs in *Outlines*.[19] It seems much simpler to conclude that *Against the Logicians* was written before *Outlines*. Ebert's reluctance to

[17] Philippson 1881, 59–63. [18] Ebert 1987. [19] Ebert 1987, 100.

consider this possibility seems to be due to his assumption that Sextus was a mere "compiler," incapable of substantial revision of the works that served as his sources, let alone of original thought. However, this assumption is without merit. While there is no doubt that Sextus made very extensive use of previous material and often followed this material very closely, we know far too little about either Sextus or his sources to be able to gauge the extent of his originality in any precise way. Thus it is entirely possible that one of Sextus' discussions of signs is his own revision of his other discussion of signs. And if so, the comparative roughness of the discussion in *Against the Logicians* suggests that it is the earlier one.

There is another consideration that supports the same conclusion. As we saw, Diogenes Laertius also gives us a brief survey of the Pyrrhonist treatment of signs. Now, Diogenes is also an author who makes heavy use of earlier sources. And in his survey of Pyrrhonism, it is often clear that he is using the *same* sources as those used by Sextus; the similarities in the thought, and often in the actual wording, are too close to be coincidental. (One might suggest that Diogenes is using Sextus himself as his source. But this seems to be ruled out by the equally frequent differences between the two;[20] for it seems clear that Diogenes was little more than a "compiler.") Diogenes and Sextus, then, are often ultimately indebted to a common source. I say "ultimately" because it is possible that they used distinct intermediate sources; but at any rate, their arguments often derive from the same original material. And their discussions of signs is a case in point. Now, it is the treatment of signs in *Against the Logicians* that is much closer to Diogenes' survey of the Pyrrhonist position on signs than is the treatment of signs in *Outlines*; almost everything in Diogenes' survey has a counterpart in the arguments against signs in *Against the Logicians*, but there are almost no such close parallels between Diogenes' survey and the arguments in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. And this suggests that *Against the Logicians* stays closer to the material that served as the common source for Sextus and Diogenes, whereas *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* departs further from it. But this in turn suggests – if one leaves aside Ebert's unnecessarily complex hypothesis of multiple sources – that *Against the Logicians* was written before *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*; one would normally expect the earlier work to stay closer to the material that served as its source, and the later, revised work to depart further from that material.

[20] On this point, see Barnes 1992, esp. 4249–56, 4263–8.

I have argued elsewhere that the same pattern can also be observed in Sextus' ethical writings.[21] There are two cases in which *Against the Ethicists*, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, and Diogenes Laertius share common material. And in both cases, the similarity between Diogenes and *Against the Ethicists* is much closer than that between Diogenes and *Outlines*, which suggests that *Against the Ethicists* preceded *Outlines*. I believe that there are other arguments in favor of the same conclusion. *Against the Ethicists* is often clumsier and less polished than the parallel passages of *Outlines*, suggesting that the passages in *Outlines* are a revised version of those in *Against the Ethicists*, not vice versa. As just noted, this seems to resemble the situation with Sextus' discussions of signs. But as we saw earlier, *Against the Ethicists* is also a special case in that, uniquely among Sextus' writings, it preserves the earlier variety of Pyrrhonism associated with Aenesidemus; this too suggests that it precedes *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, which attempts – not always with complete success – to adapt the material used in *Against the Ethicists* to the later form of Pyrrhonism present in most of Sextus' work. I have argued that these various points constitute strong reasons for reversing the usually held view of the order of composition of Sextus' works.[22] If my brief comments about Sextus' two discussions of signs are on the right track, we have yet further reasons for the same conclusion.[23]

[21] See Bett 1997, xxiv–xxviii, 258–60, 267–9.

[22] Bett 1997, introduction, section IV, and Commentary, passim.

[23] I would like to thank the organizers of the Centre d'études sur la philosophie hellénistique et romaine (Bernard Besnier, Alain Gigandet, and José Kany-Turpin) for inviting me to write this chapter and present it at their 2001–2 seminar. I also thank the seminar participants for their valuable comments, some of them recorded in earlier footnotes.

CHAPTER 5

Aenesidemus the Anti-Physicist

Sextus wrote at considerable length about physics; we have two sizable books of his that are now usually called *Against the Physicists* (*M* 9–10), and more than half of the final book of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (*PH* 3) covers roughly the same ground as these two books, albeit more briefly. According to Sextus, Pyrrho's disciple and biographer Timon also wrote a book or books called *Against the Physicists* (*M* 3.2). The point that Sextus says he is borrowing from this work has to do with the legitimacy or otherwise of proceeding from hypotheses, which (however congenial in general terms to Sextus' own Pyrrhonist outlook) has nothing specially to do with physics. But there is no reason to doubt the ascription, and in fact Sextus gives other evidence of an interest in physical topics on Timon's part; in his own *Against the Physicists*, and again in *Against the Musicians*, he attributes to Timon the assertion that no process divisible into parts, such as coming into being, perishing, or the like, can take place in a time that itself has no parts (*M* 10.197, *M* 6.66). A fragment of Timon's own verse about Pyrrho, quoted in Diogenes Laertius (9.64–5), seems to suggest (and to regard as a reason for praise) that Pyrrho did not concern himself with questions about the nature of the world around us; if so, Timon's own involvement in physics may represent a departure from Pyrrho, and perhaps also a development in his own thinking. But there are in any case reasons for thinking that Timon did not simply parrot his teacher (if that is what Pyrrho should be called).

I mention these points in order to prepare for the thought that it would be in no way surprising if Aenesidemus – the founder of the skeptical movement to which Sextus later belonged, a movement that regarded itself as "philosophizing in the manner of Pyrrho" (Photius, *Bibl.* 169b26–7), but presumably relied above all on the writings of Timon for its understanding of what that meant – would also have engaged in discussion about topics in physics. One would not, of course, expect Aenesidemus to have offered physical theories of his own; rather, as a skeptic, he would

be expected to have the goal of subverting confidence in the physical theories of others. And this is precisely what the evidence, limited as it is, suggests.

We do not hear of a book of Aenesidemus called *Against the Physicists*. But among the various sets of Modes summarized by Sextus is a set of Eight Modes attributed to Aenesidemus and devoted to undermining all attempts at *aitiologia*, causal explanation (*PH* 1.180–6). In both the Stoics' and Sextus' divisions of philosophical subject matter (DL 7.132, *PH* 3.13, *M* 9.195), causation comes under physics; besides, a mention of "elements" (*stoicheia*, *PH* 1.183) in the course of Sextus' extremely bare account of these Modes indicates that they were directed particularly against explanations in physics.

In addition, the summary of Aenesidemus' *Pyrrhonist Discourses* (*Purrôneioi logoi*) in Photius (*Bibl.* 169b18–171a4) makes clear that a substantial portion of that work concerned physical matters, and that the purpose throughout was to create trouble for anyone trying to fashion positive theories in this area. After an overview of the main points of the first book, which appears, like the first book of Sextus' *PH*, to have been a general account of the Pyrrhonist outlook, Photius gives one-sentence summaries of the contents of each of the other seven books. The last three books had to do with ethical topics; but for each of the second to the fifth books Photius includes topics in physics, even if these are sometimes juxtaposed with topics that, at least in Sextus, count as part of logic (170b3–22). The second book, according to Photius, concerned (besides truth, a logical issue) causes and effects, motion, coming into being and perishing, "and their opposites" (170b6–7 – it is not clear what this might mean except as applied to motion). The third book dealt, again, with motion (in addition to sense perception). The fourth book had to do with signs, which for Sextus, at least as a topic in its own right, falls under logic; but signs may of course be made use of in physical inquiry, and Photius also includes as part of the subject matter of this book "the typical sequence of impasses about the whole of nature and the universe and the gods" (170b15–16). Finally, the fifth book is again said to deal with causes, attacking those who engage in *aitiologia*; Photius also refers here to a set of Modes on this subject that are, we may assume, the same ones run through so telegraphically by Sextus.

To this we can add that Sextus' own *Against the Physicists* contains a few mentions of Aenesidemus. In some cases the reference is to "Aenesidemus in accordance with Heraclitus" (*M* 9.337, 10.216, cf. 233), and the question of what this means, and what such references can allow us to

infer about Aenesidemus' own views, is a notoriously difficult one.[1] But we are also told of an argument employed by Aenesidemus to the conclusion that "nothing is a cause" (*M* 9.218–26); there is no obvious connection with the styles of argument in the Eight Modes concerning causation, but this further testifies to Aenesidemus' interest in the topic. Besides this, we are told that Aenesidemus employed a twofold distinction among types of motion (*M* 10.38) – presumably in order to mount a critique of other philosophers' theories of motion, although this is not specified.

So we need not doubt that Aenesidemus involved himself in arguments about topics in physics. But now, was space or place one of these topics? I am not aware of any arguments about space or place specifically attributed to Aenesidemus by name, but the supposition is likely enough. We know from both Photius and Sextus that Aenesidemus dealt with the topic of motion (at some length, if its appearance in two different books in Photius' catalog is to be believed). And in Sextus' *Against the Physicists*, the topic of motion comes immediately after that of place, while in the physical portion of *PH* place comes immediately after the various species of motion (in the broadest sense) plus rest. We should not, of course, assume that Aenesidemus treated his topics in the same order as Sextus does his; and in fact, Photius' catalog suggests a rather different order of topics from either of Sextus', guided by no clearly discernible principle. But in both works of Sextus, the juxtaposition of motion and place is not merely accidental; there is an obvious conceptual connection between the two topics – if motion occurs, there must be such a thing as the place in which it occurs – and in both works he alludes to this in making the transition between them (*M* 10.36, *PH* 3.118). Given this connection, it is hard to believe that Aenesidemus, too, was not led to discuss place at least in the course of his discussions of motion – especially since one of the two types of motion that Sextus says Aenesidemus distinguished was "transitional motion" (*metabatikê kinêsis*, *M* 10.38, 41), i.e., motion from place to place.

This, of course, does not take us very far. Can we get any closer to a sense of *what* Aenesidemus might have said about space or place? One of the Ten Modes, summarized somewhat differently by Sextus and Diogenes Laertius and made use of or alluded to by several other authors, has to do with, in Sextus' description, "positions and intervals and places" (*tas theseis kai ta diastêmata kai tous topous*, *PH* 1.118), and in Diogenes', with "distances and what kind of positions and places" (*tas apostaseis kai poias*

[1] On this issue, see Schofield 2007; Hankinson 2010.

theseis kai tous topous, 9.85 – Diogenes adds "and the things in the places," but as Annas and Barnes point out, this seems not to contribute anything significant[2]). Now, the Ten Modes have usually been regarded as deriving from Aenesidemus; not in the sense that he invented them from scratch – for, as is well known, much of the material in them can be traced back centuries before his time – but in the sense that he compiled this material into a systematic scheme of argument to be used for specifically skeptical purposes. Since Aenesidemus' authorship of the Ten Modes has been questioned in recent times,[3] I think it is worth rehearsing the reasons why the attribution is fundamentally sound.

In the surviving summary of the Ten Modes in Sextus, he ascribes them not to Aenesidemus but to "the older skeptics" (*PH* 1.36), by contrast with the "younger skeptics" (*PH* 1.164) to whom he ascribes the Five Modes; since the terms "older skeptics" and "younger skeptics" have no precise reference, this tells us nothing beyond a relative chronology of the two sets. But in *Against the Logicians* (*M* 7.345), during a mention of the deceptiveness of the senses, Sextus adds the following back reference: "as we showed in going over the Ten Modes of Aenesidemus." Now, as Karel Janáček showed in his seminal article "Die Hauptschrift des Sextus Empiricus als Torso erhalten?,"[4] the books that we now know as *Against the Logicians*, *Physicists*, and *Ethicists* are the surviving portions of a work that must originally have included an opening, general treatment of Pyrrhonism, occupying the same status as *PH* 1 does in relation to *PH* 2 and 3; it is likely, then, that Sextus is referring back to a version of the Ten Modes in this lost part – that is, earlier in the same work – rather than to the version in *PH* 1. But either way, there is no reason to doubt the plain significance of Sextus' phrase "the Ten Modes of Aenesidemus"; and this is confirmed by the reference to Aenesidemus' Modes in the critique of Pyrrhonism by Aristocles of Messene (in Eusebius, *Praep. evang.* 14.18.11), who is much closer to Aenesidemus' own time than is Sextus. Admittedly Aristocles refers to *nine* Modes, not ten. But there are many possible explanations of this discrepancy, and Aristocles' description of the content of these Modes, compressed as it is, makes clear that what he is attributing to Aenesidemus is a version of the same material that appears as the Ten Modes in Diogenes and Sextus – including an argument based on "distances [*apostêmata*] and sizes and motions" that looks like the Mode in which we are interested. That we are entitled, then, to think of the Ten Modes as "of Aenesidemus," in the sense explained, seems clear enough;

[2] Annas and Barnes 1985, 101. [3] See Hankinson 1995, 120–1. [4] Janáček 1963.

thus far I am in complete agreement with Emidio Spinelli's recent discussion in his *Questioni scettiche*.[5]

But there is a little more to add, in confirmation both of a lost treatment of the Ten Modes by Sextus and of Aenesidemus' involvement with these Modes; here I must acknowledge a debt to David Sedley.[6] At one point in Diogenes' treatment of the Ten Modes, there is a mention of different orderings of these Modes by different authors; in the course of this Diogenes says, "The ninth [that is, the ninth in his own ordering] Sextus and Aenesidemus put tenth; and the tenth Sextus says is eighth" (9.87). Now, Diogenes' tenth Mode, the Mode of Relativity, is indeed paralleled by the eighth Mode in Sextus' *PH* 1 treatment. But the ninth in Diogenes is also the ninth in *PH* 1, not the tenth. So either someone has made a mistake or "Sextus and Aenesidemus" refers to a different treatment in the works of Sextus, a treatment in which, unlike in the version that we have, Sextus followed Aenesidemus' original ordering. Since we already have good reason to believe that there was a lost general portion of Sextus' longer work, and a general treatment of Pyrrhonism is just where one would expect to find an account of the Modes, I think we may accept the latter hypothesis; and the greater proximity to Aenesidemus in this longer work, as compared with the treatment of the Ten Modes in *PH* 1, may be taken as an indication that this work was composed earlier than *PH*, rather than later.

We have, then, two surviving versions of a Mode concerning place and related matters that can reliably be traced to Aenesidemus. It is here, if anywhere, that we can hope to find evidence of how Aenesidemus may have treated the topic of place. The question now is whether it is possible to discern from the surviving versions what Aenesidemus' own version of this Mode may have looked like. Sextus' and Diogenes' versions of the Mode differ considerably, but also share many elements. Sorting out the similarities and the differences is clearly the first step.

As we saw, both Sextus and Diogenes use three key terms to introduce this Mode, but they are not exactly the same. While both have "positions" (*theseis*) and "places" (*topous*), Sextus has "intervals" (*diastêmata*) and Diogenes has "distances" (*apostaseis*). Both terms seem to have some support from earlier sources. Philo of Alexandria, whose reproduction of the Modes – albeit not under that title, and for a non-skeptical purpose – is

[5] Spinelli 2005, 30–1.

[6] I first heard Sedley present these ideas at the 2007 Cambridge Mayweek seminar on Diogenes Laertius IX. They are now included in Sedley 2015, 180.

the earliest that we have, uses precisely the same three terms as Sextus, in the same order (*De ebr.* 181). Since Philo is clearly not Sextus' source, this suggests a version of the Modes circulating prior to Philo – that is to say, not long after Aenesidemus' own time – on which Philo and, perhaps indirectly, Sextus drew, and in which these three terms formed the label for this Mode. On the other hand, as noted earlier, in what appears to be a brief allusion to this Mode, Aristocles uses the word *apostêmata*. This may simply be a case of Aristocles reproducing inexactly a text for which he has great contempt, and of which he is in any case giving only a very cursory report. But it could also reflect the presence of a variant term in an early version of this Mode, and if so, Diogenes' *apostaseis* would not be much of a departure from this.

The next question is whether this difference of terminology is of any philosophical significance. Annas and Barnes say that Diogenes' *apostaseis*, "distances," is "slightly inaccurate," because not all the examples that fall under this heading have to do with different appearances at different *distances*; Sextus' fuller version, they say, has an example in which the differing "intervals" (*diastêmata*) are different *angles* from which something is viewed, not different distances.[7] But this seems to me problematic; however, the matter is complicated, and it will take a little while to untangle the issues.

In the example in question, which is indeed grouped with examples involving different *diastêmata*, Sextus says that "the same colonnade when seen from one end appears tapering, but from the middle symmetrical from each side" (*PH* 1.118).[8] I take it we are to imagine standing between a pair of parallel rows of columns. If we stand at one end of the rows, the columns will appear to be getting closer and closer together, in a single uniform sequence, as one runs one's eye along the rows from one end to the other; but if we stand in the middle of the rows and face in either direction, they will appear to be getting closer together, albeit to a somewhat lesser degree than in the first case, in two different and symmetrical sequences approaching both ends. Now, if this is the right way to read the example, then it involves *both* distances *and* angles or directions; in the second scenario one end looks different from how it looked in the first scenario, because of a difference in the distance, but in addition the entire colonnade has a symmetrical look because of being looked at (in two parts)

[7] Annas and Barnes 1985, 101.
[8] Literally, "from every side" (*pantothen*). But there seem to be only two possibilities.

from two opposite directions as opposed to being looked at (as a whole) from just one direction. Sextus, however, concentrates on the second aspect, referring to the symmetry in one scenario versus the tapering in the other. So although there is a way in which a difference of distance does figure in the example, what he draws attention to is not this, but a difference in angle(s) or direction(s).

The question now is whether the word *diastêmata* can be understood to capture this aspect of the example. And however one translates it, it is difficult to see how it can be understood in this way. In general, *diastêma* refers to the extent by which things *stand apart* from one another; this need not always be understood in spatial terms, and for this reason "interval" may sometimes be preferable as a translation to "distance" (as in the case of musical intervals, for example). But the word is not used indiscriminately of any kind of difference; there does need to be some kind of identifiable *gap* between the items separated by a *diastêma*. And there just does not seem to be any such identifiable gap in the case of different angles or directions of viewing.

As noted a moment ago, although this example could be seen as, at least in part, one involving different distances or intervals, this is not the side of it that Sextus chooses to emphasize. And so, if I am right about the term *diastêma*, it follows that this example is not in fact best situated under the heading of *diastêmata*; it might better have gone under the heading of "places." It also follows that it is Sextus, not Diogenes, who is being "slightly inaccurate," since the relevant examples in Diogenes do exclusively involve differences of distance. And finally, it follows that there is no significant difference between the terms used by the two authors; even though *diastêmata* can refer to intervals that are not physical distances, physical distances are the only thing that it could in fact refer to in this passage of Sextus. So while the evidence may favor this, rather than *apostaseis*, having been Aenesidemus' own term, nothing in our interpretation of the passage turns on this.

Aside from the precise terminology, what kinds of cases are collected under these three headings? With the exception of the case just discussed, Sextus organizes the data in an orderly manner, beginning with examples where the same thing appears different from different *distances* – that is, closer up or further away – then continuing with examples where the same thing appears different in different *places* – such as in water as opposed to in the air, indoors as opposed to outdoors, or (of eggs) inside a bird as opposed to laid – and ending with examples where the same thing appears different in different *positions* – such as flat versus upright, or turned in one

direction versus another. Diogenes begins by listing a number of general ways in which things may present differing and seemingly conflicting appearances – big versus small, square versus round, etc. – and then gives a number of specific examples. The last two of these examples also appear in Sextus, both as cases of different appearances in different *positions*: the picture that appears flat when laid horizontally, but three-dimensional when upright and viewed as an image, and the dove's neck that appears differently colored depending on which way it is turned. These are preceded in Diogenes by two cases of different appearances at different *distances* – mountains and the sun (though in the latter case, of course, we have experience only of the distant appearance[9]) – and two of different appearances in different *places* – the sun at different points in the sky, and the same body in the woods or in open country. Contrary to Annas and Barnes, then, who regard Diogenes' ordering as purely haphazard,[10] this seems to follow the same order as Sextus once we get to the specific cases, even if these are preceded by generalities that follow no clear pattern. In addition, most of Diogenes' general kinds of differences clearly recall, or at least clearly conform to, other examples in Sextus' account. Diogenes' big/small fits Sextus' boat that appears small (and stationary) when at a distance, but larger (and in motion) when close up; Diogenes' square/round recalls Sextus' tower that looks round at a distance but square close up; Diogenes' straight/bent recalls the oar that looks bent in water but straight outside it, one of Sextus' examples under "places"; and Diogenes' flat/with projections again recalls the picture, which, as just noted, appears later as one of Diogenes' own specific cases.

It seems reasonable to infer, then, that although a number of the specific examples in Diogenes do not appear in Sextus, and also vice versa – Sextus' colonnade does not appear in Diogenes, nor do several of Sextus' examples under "places," to which we will return – the original version of this Mode included a number of examples, sorted into groups according to each of the three main headings; and the examples most likely to have appeared in the original version are the ones that either occur directly in both Sextus

[9] The text is problematic at this point. The Greek says ὁ γοῦν ἥλιος παρὰ τὸ διάστημα . . . φαίνεται – "the sun appears . . . on account of the distance [note the word διάστημα]" but none of the manuscripts offers an intelligible epithet in the space I have left blank. Some have accepted the proposal μικρός, "small"; Annas and Barnes 1985, 187–8, propose ποδιαῖος, "a foot across." In any case, we are told how the sun appears from afar, and it is merely implied, rather than stated, that it appears very different at close quarters.

[10] Annas and Barnes 1985, 102.

and Diogenes or occur in Sextus and are suggested by Diogenes' opening generalities.[11] The most likely of all is the oar that looks straight in the air but bent in the water, since this also appears in Philo's version of this Mode. Aside from this, Philo's version is mostly confined to generalities rather than specific cases;[12] but one of these general points is that polygonal objects sometimes look round, which is reminiscent of Sextus' tower that looks square from close at hand but round from a distance.

At any rate, I think we have a fair idea of the flavor of the examples that Aenesidemus' Mode will have included. The next question is how these examples are supposed to produce a skeptical result. For a natural reaction to the phenomenon of diverse and apparently conflicting appearances, on these subjects as on any others, is "so what?" While conflicting appearances do at least present an issue or a demand for explanation, there is no obvious reason why this should have skeptical consequences. As is well known, the oar that looks bent in water makes its first appearance in western philosophy in book 10 of Plato's *Republic*. The point here is to illustrate that the part of the soul that includes the senses is liable to being deceived, and therefore less reliable than the rational part. This may of course lead us to mistrust the senses on certain occasions, but since the senses are only one part of our cognitive apparatus, it does not push us toward any kind of generalized skepticism. The effect is not to make us wonder about how things really are; on the contrary, the verdict that the senses are sometimes

[11] It is striking that every item on this list – the picture, the bird's neck, the boat, the tower, and the oar – also seems to have been used by the skeptical Academics in arguments against the possibility of Stoic apprehension (*katalêpsis*), arguments that proceed by casting doubt on the power of the senses. In a passage on this subject in Cicero's *Academica* (2.79–82) we find the oar, the bird's neck, and the boat; in a passage of Sextus' *Against the Logicians* (*M* 7.411–14) summarizing Academic arguments against apprehension we find the picture, the tower, the oar, and the boat. In addition, Cicero mentions the apparent size of the sun (*Acad.* 2.82), which, as we saw, is also mentioned by Diogenes. Now, Aenesidemus was himself an Academic before breaking away to start the Pyrrhonist movement (see Photius, *Bibl.* 169b32–3). Although the use to which these examples are put in Aenesidemus' Mode is somewhat different from their Academic context, it is easy to suppose that he was familiar with these examples from his time in the Academy and chose to use them for his own purposes in this Mode. It is perhaps too much to say that examples that figure in one or other surviving version of this Mode and were also employed by the Academics are thereby more likely to have appeared in Aenesidemus' original version. But the fact that the Academics employed them at least shows that Aenesidemus would have had them ready to hand; if these examples largely correspond with the list of examples that seem on other grounds to be most likely to go back to Aenesidemus himself, that is no great surprise.

[12] Annas and Barnes 1985, 102, say that Philo's account clearly distinguishes the three main categories of appearances, though in a different order from Sextus. But they do not elaborate, and I must admit that I fail to see any clear pattern. But Philo's version of this Modes will not concern us much longer, since it is not in fact skeptical at all; I return to this point shortly.

deceived relies on a confidence that we do have a grasp of this, from another source that does not share the senses' limitations.

Again, Diogenes' examples of the sun looking different when rising and at its zenith, and of mountains looking "airy" (*aeroeidê*) at a distance, but not when close up, are paralleled by examples in a treatise on optics from the third century BC, preserved in fragmentary form in a papyrus in the Louvre (P. Louvre 7733). The numerous cases of conflicting appearances cited in this work actually persuaded one editor to regard it as a skeptical text.[13] But this is a misconception; although the argument is extremely hard to make out in detail, the purpose of the treatise, at least in the part to which these surviving fragments belonged, was clearly to *explain away* various misleading appearances on the basis of an understanding of how certain optical phenomena come about. The author is not casting doubt on our ability to know how things are, but showing why things often look different from how they are, on the assumption that we know very well how that is.[14] Philo's approach, too, in this Mode as in others, is to present a number of cases of what he assumes to be *deceptive* appearances; he takes it that we have a grasp of how things really are, and concentrates on showing the ways in which we can be led astray. The oar is a good example; in Philo's treatment this comes out as "Oars too, even if they are exceptionally straight, turn out to look bent under water." We are not here being invited to question whether the oar is really straight or bent, but to ponder the fact that it sometimes does not look straight even though it really is. This is why I said that, though Philo makes use of the material in the Ten Modes, his purpose in doing so is not skeptical. Finally, the case of the square or round tower of course derives from the Epicureans, who claimed in radically anti-skeptical fashion that "all appearances are true." As I understand this example (relying especially on Sextus, *M* 7.208), what the Epicureans take to be true in this case is that the atomic images emanating from the tower and striking the sense organs are indeed either round or square, depending on whether the tower is close or far away. If the tower is far away, the image, though starting out square – since it came from a square tower – has its corners worn off in transit, and so is in fact round by the time it reaches the viewer; but if the tower is close, the image

[13] Lasserre 1975.

[14] I have discussed this in detail in Bett 2007. On the first page of this article I say, "To my knowledge this text has never before been discussed in English." I must confess that I failed to notice that Annas and Barnes 1985 include a brief discussion of it, including a translation of a few lines, in the course of their chapter on this very Mode (107); Annas and Barnes mention, but do not endorse, the skeptical interpretation.

does not have enough of a journey for this transformation to occur, and so it is still square when it confronts our senses. But whether or not this is the right way to read the example, the Epicureans were clearly not trying to subvert our grasp of how things really are, but to explain why things appear as they do by appeal to how they really are.

So what is it about the treatment of these examples in Sextus' and Diogenes' versions of this Mode that turns them in a skeptical direction? One point that sets these apart from the treatments of the same or similar examples mentioned in the previous paragraph is that all the appearances are considered on a par; there is no suggestion that some appearances are veridical and others not. This is obvious is Sextus, who scatters the word "appears" (*phainetai*) throughout this Mode, and who clearly and explicitly presents all the examples as cases of differing appearances – and no more than that. It is a little less obvious in Diogenes, because his examples are told in a more compressed form. But Diogenes starts his generalized examples by saying that "things that seem large appear small" (*ta dokount'einai megala mikra phainetai*), and all the generalized examples then depend on this same *dokount'* and *phainetai*; the specific examples that follow then all depend on another single *phainetai*.

But this still does not get us to anything skeptical unless some move is made that is supposed to prevent us from ever getting *beyond* the level of mere appearances. In Diogenes this comes in a single closing sentence: "Since, then, it is not possible to perceive these things apart from places and positions, their nature is not known." In Sextus' version of the Mode a similar juxtaposition of points appears twice. Having rehearsed all his examples, Sextus immediately adds, "Since, then, all the things that appear are observed in some place and from some interval and in some position – each of which creates a lot of variation for the appearance, as we have indicated – we will be compelled through this Mode, too, to come to suspension of judgment" (*PH* 1.121). And then in concluding his treatment of this Mode he says, "We are perhaps able to say how each thing appears in terms of this position or this interval or in this place, but we are not able, because of what was said before, to reveal what it is like in its nature" (123). The two versions seem, then, to agree on two things: first, we never observe things *except* in some place or in some position or at some interval, and second, because of this limitation, we are not in a position to determine the *nature* of these things.

How, more precisely, is this supposed to work? Diogenes says nothing more, as if it is immediately clear how one gets from the first point to the second. Sextus, on the other hand, inserts an argument between the two

passages that I just quoted (121–3). He imagines that contrary to his own rigorous evenhandedness, someone tries to mount an argument to the effect that some of these appearances show us things as they really are, while others distort them. Against this, he argues that any such attempt would have to proceed with or without a demonstration (*apodeixis*). If there is no demonstration, then there is no reason why we should believe it. And if there is a demonstration, the veracity of that demonstration would itself be subject to demonstration, and so on. In other words, Sextus presents us with two of the Five Modes, those of Hypothesis and Infinite Regress. Now the Five Modes, as noted earlier, are attributed by Sextus to an unnamed group of "later skeptics" – later, that is, than the purveyors of the Ten Modes. Hence this material cannot have appeared in the original version of the Mode in which we are interested; it must be a later importation by Sextus or his source. This kind of contamination of the Ten Modes by material from the Five Modes is not unusual in Sextus, but it never occurs in Diogenes' presentation of the Ten Modes. Although Diogenes' version of the Ten Modes is later than Sextus' – as we saw, it refers to it, and may in certain respects be viewed as attempting to improve it[15] – it is in this respect clearly more faithful to the Ten Modes as originally devised by Aenesidemus.

We are back, then, with the connection suggested by both Sextus and Diogenes: we are not able to get clear on the nature of things, and this is because we only ever encounter things at some interval or in some place or in some position. And we need to explain this connection *without* relying on the argument, indebted to the Five Modes, that we find in Sextus. Now one possibility, of course, is that even if it was left to the "later skeptics" to put the arguments collected under the Five Modes into a systematic form, arguments of this type could nonetheless have been used by earlier skeptics when it suited them; so the fact that Sextus introduces an argument that

[15] Especially when it comes to the ordering of the Modes; here again I am following some suggestions in Sedley 2015 (cf. n. 6). The most important change is in the placing of the Relativity Mode; as noted earlier, this is eighth in Sextus but tenth in Diogenes. Since this one is in a sense a generalization of the Ten Modes as a group (as Sextus himself points out, *PH* 1.38–9), it makes more sense to have it at the end than interspersed with much more specific Modes. Second, Sextus' tenth Mode, on differences in ethical belief and practice, is placed fifth in Diogenes. The effect is to make all of the first five Modes focused on differences in observers; the first four (in both authors) are clearly of this kind, and in this respect (despite what Sextus says about it, *PH* 1.38) the Ethical Mode belongs with them. Another effect is that the remaining four (excluding the Relativity Mode), all of which are more centered on differences in the objects observed, now form a separate and uniform group.

bears on its face the signs of having been lifted from the Five Modes does not mean that such arguments could not have figured in earlier versions of this Mode, perhaps in a more informal guise. As is well known, Aristotle confronts what are clear ancestors of several of the Five Modes in defending his own account of the structure of a science against challenges in *Posterior Analytics* (I.3); the Five Modes, just as much as the Ten, are compilations of previously existing material rather than wholesale inventions.

But this would not address one striking feature of Diogenes' and Sextus' concluding remarks quoted earlier. In both authors our failure to grasp the nature of things is said, or at least implied, to be *because of* the fact that we only ever experience things in specific places or positions or at specific intervals. The Five Modes are designed to address any case where we are presented with conflicting appearances, and in that sense Sextus is not ill-advised to introduce material from those Modes; it seems to be suited to derive a skeptical result from the phenomena offered for our consideration. But the Five Modes have nothing specifically to do with the idea that our cognitive limitations are due to the fact that things are always in some place or position or at some interval; yet that seems to be something that both surviving versions of the Modes make a point to emphasize. And that suggests another way of understanding the argument, which may be closer to how Aenesidemus originally conceived it.

Annas and Barnes say, "We find no unity in the Fifth Mode [i.e., in Sextus' ordering], and it might properly be regarded as a set of three distinct modes."[16] Although they are right that the divisions of subject matter in the Ten Modes are to some extent arbitrary, this seems to me an exaggeration. This Mode has to do with, in a broad sense, *where* the object is located; interval or distance, place, and position are distinct types of issue under this broad heading, but there is an obvious connection among them. Annas and Barnes also say that the examples themselves are "a mixed bag" – mixed, that is, in terms of their level of persuasiveness – and that some of them "do not seem to produce any conflict at all." They point particularly to several examples in Sextus: eggs appear soft inside the bird and hard when laid, lyngurion (that is, lynx urine, which was supposed to congeal to form a kind of amber) appears liquid inside the lynx but hard in the outside air, and coral appears soft in the water but, again, hard in the outside air. And they say, "It is absurd to wonder whether eggs are *really*

[16] Annas and Barnes 1985, 102.

hard or soft," and similarly absurd, *mutatis mutandis*, for the other cases.[17] But is this absurd? Or, to put it another way, should we assume that the examples were necessarily meant to produce *conflict* – which, as they rightly note, these do not appear to do? Trying to take these examples seriously may bring us closer to understanding how the argument was supposed to work.

Recall that both Sextus and Diogenes seem to imply that our grasp of the nature of things is thwarted precisely by the fact that things are always in some place or position or at some interval from the viewer. Now this suggests that the nature of a thing would be the way the thing is independently of any place, position, or interval (or any other particular circumstances, we might add – for this is just one Mode out of several). This nature would presumably be unaffected by the object's particular place, position, or interval from the viewer at any given time, and so would be invariant, at least as far as those features were concerned (but again, this Mode is not the only one). The fact that things strike us differently when they are in different places or positions or at different intervals makes it particularly obvious that we do not have access to this invariant nature; it also suggests that the way they strike us in these different conditions is due to the influence of those conditions themselves – which just reinforces the point about our lack of access, since the things are bound always to be in some condition or other.

Now, how does this apply to the bird's eggs and related cases? The egg appears soft when inside the bird but hard after the bird has laid it. Obviously the egg is always in some place or other – either in the bird or outside it; and the character presented to us by the egg varies depending on which of these places it is in. But this means, according to the line of thought rehearsed in the previous paragraph, that it is not part of the egg's *nature* to be either soft or hard. A thing's nature does not vary with conditions, but the softness and hardness of the egg obtain only in certain specific conditions. Hence, if we are trying to make an inventory of the features that belong to the egg by nature, neither softness nor hardness will figure on that list – or at least, we will have no reason to think so. And if the same kind of variability with conditions can be shown to obtain with any of the observable features of the egg, this would seem to cut us off from any kind of grasp of its nature.

Notice that the notion that the appearances might be *deceptive* plays no necessary role in this line of thinking. It is not that we might be *wrong* in

[17] Annas and Barnes 1985, 103.

thinking that the egg is soft when inside the bird or hard when outside it. The point is simply that the egg's softness is confined to its place inside the bird and its hardness to its place outside the bird; since these observed features are confined to one place as opposed to another, neither one of them can be taken to point toward the thing's nature. And in this sense the question "Is the egg *really* hard or soft?," which was regarded by Annas and Barnes as absurd, has a straightforward answer: "If by 'really' you mean 'by nature,' we cannot say that it is really either hard or soft." It might be wondered, in this case, why Sextus even speaks of the egg *appearing* soft in the one place and hard in the other; why not say that it *is* soft and hard, respectively? The point, I take it, is to emphasize that the egg's softness or hardness is not a guide to the nature of the thing, given each one's restriction to a specific place. The egg *presents itself as* – and in this sense, "appears" – soft in one place and hard in the other, but neither "appearance" can be taken to show us how the egg is by nature. If this is the notion of appearance in operation here, it has a very respectable precedent. At the end of *Republic* V Plato has Socrates speak of the many beautiful things that will also *appear* ugly, the many just things that will also *appear* unjust, and so on (479a–b). Again the point is not that we might be mistaken in considering these things ugly in certain circumstances. On the contrary, the ugliness that they present in certain circumstances is taken seriously, as being a decisive obstacle to our considering them really beautiful; for something truly beautiful – something that we could legitimately say "is" beautiful – would have to manifest its beauty invariably and without regard to circumstances. Socrates' point is that nothing in the sensible realm measures up to that standard – for the epithets "beautiful" and "ugly" or for any others; only the Forms do that. And that is his point in calling the beauty and ugliness of sensible things merely "apparent."

Here, then, is a way of spelling out the contrast between the nature of a thing, and how it strikes us when in a certain place or in a certain position or at a certain interval, which does not depend on the kind of thinking characteristic of the Five Modes; the focus is not on a conflict between the thing's appearances, but on the fact that these appearances are all restricted to certain specific conditions. Now, I have concentrated on a small cluster of examples, ones that seemed particularly inappropriate to an interpretation in terms of conflicting appearances between which one unsuccessfully attempts to choose. But most of the examples, in both Sextus' and Diogenes' versions of the Mode on which we have focused, are admittedly amenable to that interpretation, and it is no doubt most natural for us to read them in that way. However, it does not follow that they cannot also

be read in the other way. Perhaps the oar can be considered to present a bent aspect when in water and a straight aspect when in the air, just as the egg presents a soft aspect when inside the bird and a hard aspect when outside it; perhaps the sun comes to assume different features as it occupies different positions in the sky; and perhaps doves' necks change color as they turn in different directions. If so, then in these cases, too, the restrictedness of each appearance to specific conditions would be the central notion, not the conflict between the two appearances and the pressure to try to choose between them.

It must also be admitted that the examples on which I have focused in developing this alternative interpretation – the egg, the coral, and lyngurion – appear only in Sextus' version of this Mode.[18] By the standard that I introduced earlier, according to which examples that appeared both in Sextus and in Diogenes were more likely to go back to Aenesidemus than those that appear only in one author, these examples are clearly not ones that we can attribute to Aenesidemus with any confidence. However, the idea of a connection between the restrictedness of a thing's appearances to specific conditions and our inability to get at the nature of the thing does appear in both authors, and it was that idea that I was using those examples to try to explain. One could well imagine that, if Aenesidemus did develop a line of thought of the sort that I have sketched, others might later have introduced examples that were especially suitable to that line of thought – perhaps more unambiguously so than the examples he himself had used.

I have suggested the possibility of Aenesidemus' having argued for a skeptical conclusion – that we are not in a position to grasp the nature of things – by a somewhat different route from that with which we are familiar in most of Sextus (including in Sextus' version of this Mode itself). Do we have any other evidence that Aenesidemus argued in this way? Well, for one thing, several other of the Ten Modes in Sextus' presentation of them also include a contrast between our awareness of how things strike us in certain specific conditions and a grasp of the *nature* of those things, or of how they are "purely" (*eilikrinôs*) or "barely" (*psilôs*) or "absolutely" (*apolutôs*) – that is, independently of any particular conditions (*PH* 1.124, 128, 134, 135, 140, 144, 163); the latter is not available to us because our experience of the things always takes place in some conditions or other. The Mode relating to "positions and intervals and places," then, seems to be by no means unique in this respect. In addition,

[18] In addition, none of them appears in the passages on the Academics that I mentioned earlier (cf. note 11).

a similar contrast can be found in another work of Sextus, *Against the Ethicists*: we cannot speak of things as being good or bad by nature because we only ever experience things as good or bad in relation to specific circumstances or persons (*M* 11.114, 118). I have long argued that *Against the Ethicists*, and the larger work to which it belonged, is earlier than Sextus' *PH*, and that *Against the Ethicists* in particular offers a form of Pyrrhonism distinct from, and earlier than, that which we find generally in Sextus.[19] The case for connecting this earlier Pyrrhonism specifically with Aenesidemus is complicated and depends on a detailed comparison with the summary by Photius that I made use of at the beginning. It is by no means uncontroversial, and I certainly cannot undertake to defend it here.[20] However, to the extent that one finds it plausible, one will also find the form of argument that I have tentatively ascribed to Aenesidemus, on the basis of Sextus' and Diogenes' version of the Mode that has been our subject, to be part of a wider pattern.

I close with two final questions, both of which are independent of the question of which of the two possible interpretations of this Mode that I have offered is closer to Aenesidemus' original goal. First, does our examination of this Mode point to any particular *conception* of place or space on Aenesidemus' part? The answer to this, I think, is clearly negative, and for this purpose it makes no difference which of the two interpretations one adopts. Either way, places, positions, and intervals are simply a set of conditions of objects – one set out of many, as the multitude of Modes makes clear – that stand in the way of our grasping how those objects really are. For this purpose it does not matter what place itself is; the point is that being in different places, or in different positions, or at different intervals, results in the objects appearing differently, and that is the starting point for skeptical reasoning. Nor, indeed, would we expect Aenesidemus, as a skeptic, to have advocated or presupposed any particular conception of place. We saw at the outset that Aenesidemus tackled topics in physics that are at least closely related to place, and that it would have been in no way surprising if, in the course of his scrutiny of physical doctrines, he did tackle place as a topic in its own right. But if so, we can assume that his approach was critical rather than constructive. Whatever his arguments on the subject may have been, they would in this respect

[19] See especially Bett 1997.

[20] For interpretations of Aenesidemus that make his position much closer to the later Pyrrhonism of Sextus, see Schofield 2007; Hankinson 2010. Both are also to varying degrees skeptical of my view of the distinctness of *Against the Ethicists*; on this, see also Machuca 2011.

have resembled the argument in the Mode on place and related matters. And in this respect Aenesidemus does not belong in the same company as those philosophers we might naturally think of as physicists, many of whom did put forward positive conceptions and theories of place or space.

However, if Sextus' approach to physics is any guide at all, we can also assume that Aenesidemus engaged in discussion about the conceptions and theories advanced by (in Sextus' terminology) "dogmatists" such as these. And this leads to my second question: is it possible to connect what Aenesidemus does in the Mode on place, etc. with his approach to physics in general? Not directly, perhaps. The Ten Modes mostly avoid theoretical contexts, working instead by the accumulation of everyday examples,[21] and the Mode on which we have focused is no exception. However, it is not hard to see that this Mode could quickly take one toward a much more fundamental debate between a skeptic and a proponent of some physical theory. As we saw, many of the phenomena appealed to in this Mode were also discussed by non-skeptical philosophers, and some of these claimed to have physical theories that would *explain* the appearances; rather than forcing us to suspend judgment about the way things really are, these philosophers would claim, the appearances made use of in this Mode can all be accounted for by a single consistent theory that accurately captures how things really are.

Suppose a scientist did challenge the effectiveness of this Mode along these lines. What might a skeptic say in response? There might be some objections that she could mount concerning the merits of the theory used to account for the appearances, and certainly Sextus' work includes plenty of examples of this kind of argumentation. But she might also take the discussion to a deeper level, tackling the nature of scientific theory or practice itself. The Five Modes could be of assistance here, but there could also be considerations relating more specifically to the context of physics. And among the sorts of considerations that might be especially germane in this context would be those raised in Aenesidemus' Eight Modes against the causalists, which, according to Photius, played an important role in Aenesidemus' attack on the appeal to causes in physics generally (170b17–22). Thus, even though the Mode on places, positions, and intervals is not itself part of the Pyrrhonists' detailed examination of

[21] Mostly perceptual examples, as is emphasized by Morison 2011. However, the Mode on values (tenth in Sextus' ordering) concentrates instead on different *views* on what is good or bad; and both Sextus and Diogenes list "dogmatic suppositions" – that is, theoretical rather than ordinary views – among the types of items placed in opposition in this Mode, although only Sextus includes clear-cut examples of this.

physical theories, it could easily have served as the starting point of a debate that went on to involve some of the most foundational questions in physics. At various points I have taken issue with Annas' and Barnes' reading of this Mode, but on this question I think they are absolutely right; as they say, the debate between the skeptic and the physicist that one can imagine being stimulated by this Mode "raises large questions in the philosophy of science which are still hotly debated."[22] And in this respect there is no reason to think that Aenesidemus' original version of this Mode differed from the versions that we still possess. While there is a clear sense in which Aenesidemus was an "anti-physicist," this does not at all mean that physicists could simply ignore him; and in an indirect way, at least, the Mode on which I have concentrated may have had a role in his "anti-physicist" enterprise.[23]

[22] Annas and Barnes 1985, 109.

[23] I think the audience at the 2012 Capri conference (the starting point of the volume for which this chapter was originally written) for their helpful comments; the chapter especially benefited from comments by Charles Brittain and Voula Tsouna.

CHAPTER 6

The Modes in Sextus
Theory and Practice

The Pyrrhonian Modes are standardized forms of argument designed to induce suspension of judgment. They appear in by far their most extensive forms in book 1 of Sextus Empiricus' *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (*PH* 1.35–186). Sextus gives us a group of Ten Modes, which he ascribes to "the older skeptics" (*PH* 1.36), and elsewhere to Aenesidemus (*M* 7.345); a group of Five Modes, ascribed to "the more recent skeptics" (*PH* 1.164); a group of Two Modes, which are really a compressed version of the Five;[1] and a group of Eight Modes directed against causal explanations, which he ascribes to Aenesidemus (*PH* 1.180). Versions of the Ten and the Five also appear in Diogenes Laertius' life of Pyrrho (9.79–89). Diogenes ascribes the Five to someone called Agrippa, but this is of little help, since this Agrippa is otherwise unattested in the ancient sources except as the title of a book mentioned by Diogenes elsewhere in this same life (9.106) – and its author, Apellas, is also someone of whom we otherwise hear nothing. Beyond this, there are echoes and reports of the Modes, especially the Ten Modes, in several other authors;[2] these may sometimes provide valuable information on points of detail, but they do not tell us much about how the Modes actually worked. Diogenes' report is brief and not given to explanation, especially when it comes to the Five Modes; while it too can certainly tell us things worth knowing – and we shall see some examples of this – it is clear that to get a sense of what the Modes were like as live philosophical devices, in the hands of an actual practitioner of Pyrrhonism, we must rely almost entirely on Sextus.[3]

To this we can add that Sextus' account of the Eight Modes on causal explanation is also very brief and undeveloped. Rather than giving any

[1] On this, see Barnes 1990, 116–19.
[2] For a brief account of the sources on the Ten Modes outside Sextus and Diogenes, see Annas and Barnes 1985, chapter 3.
[3] On the Ten Modes in Diogenes, see Sedley 2015.

detail on what the arguments in these Modes looked like, Sextus just mentions the general thrust of each one, usually devoting no more than one sentence to each of them (*PH* 1.180–5). Having done this, he immediately pivots and explains how the Five Modes, which he discussed shortly before (*PH* 1.164–77), may also be used to target causal explanations – and the Eight are never mentioned again.[4] It looks as if Sextus is not particularly comfortable with the Eight Modes; he feels some obligation to mention them for the sake of completeness, but drops the subject as soon as possible.[5] And so, bearing in mind that the Two are not really distinct from the Five, this leaves the Ten Modes and the Five Modes, in Sextus' version of them, as the ones most likely to be of interest.

It is therefore no surprise that the Ten and the Five Modes, primarily as expounded by Sextus, have been the subject of a good number of philosophically subtle analyses in recent scholarship.[6] In what follows, I shall consider the point and purpose of these Modes, in Sextus' official exposition of them; and this will include some comment on the work of other scholars. But I also want to consider another question that has not been given much attention, at least in detail: how, and in what contexts, Sextus actually uses these Modes in his writings as a whole. While book 1 of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* is a general account of Sextus' brand of skepticism, all the other books of his surviving oeuvre belong to what he calls the "specific" side of skepticism (*PH* 1.5–6), where one scrutinizes the theories of non-skeptical thinkers and brings about suspension of judgment on the topics on which they claim to have discovered the truth.[7] It is well known that in these other books, Sextus frequently appeals to one or more of the Five Modes, whereas his references to the Ten Modes are few and far

[4] Even when the topic is causation. In his discussion of causation in *Against the Physicists*, Sextus appeals to arguments of Aenesidemus on this topic; but these involve "impasses concerning coming into being" (*peri tês geneseôs aporiais*, *M* 9.218) – that is, roughly, problems in explaining how something can bring about an effect that was not already in existence – and there is no apparent connection with the points mentioned in Sextus' rehearsal of the Eight Modes.

[5] I have said a little about the Eight Modes in Chapter 4 in this volume, Section III. See also Woodruff 2010, section VII.

[6] Two landmark works are Annas and Barnes 1985 and Barnes 1990. Important recent studies include Powers 2010; Woodruff 2010; Morison 2011 (especially section 7); Morison 2014 (especially section 3.5); Brennan and Lee 2014; Bullock 2016; and Brennan and Roberts 2018 (especially section 5).

[7] Strictly speaking, in the passage quoted Sextus confines the "specific" part to the examination of theories in the three main divisions of philosophy: logic, physics, and ethics. But this is because he is giving a preview of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, where that is indeed the agenda. However, Sextus' writings also include *Against Those in the Disciplines* (*M* 1–6), which skeptically examines theories in several non-philosophical disciplines, and this too could be counted under the "specific" side of skepticism.

between. But I think we can be a little more precise about when the Modes are particularly useful to him, and what use he makes of them.

I

As a number of the other chapters in this volume explain, Sextus describes skepticism as an "ability" (*dunamis*, *PH* 1.8) – more specifically, an ability to produce suspension of judgment (*epochê*), and thereby tranquility (*ataraxia*). The way this works is by assembling arguments and impressions on any given topic that are in opposition to one another; faced with the "equal strength" (*isostheneia*) of the considerations on each side, one suspends judgment on the topic in question – there is no way to choose between or among the opposing points of view. I have also elsewhere expressed a preference for a reading of this according to which this suspension of judgment is a psychological effect rather than a rational conclusion.[8] Skepticism does not argue for the conclusion that we *ought* to suspend judgment, given the merits of the arguments; rather, it brings about a certain *outcome* – suspension of judgment – as a result of the equal attractiveness (or unattractiveness) of the various positions on offer. If it was an argument for the conclusion that one ought to suspend judgment, that would invite the question "why?"; and it is hard to see how to answer except by appealing to norms of rationality – norms that Sextus, who claims to suspend judgment about at least all theoretical matters (*PH* 1.13), and who includes deduction, induction, and demonstration among the targets of his skeptical procedure (*PH* 2.134–204), would have no business signing on to.

How do the Modes fit into this picture? I begin with the Ten Modes. According to what Ben Morison has called "the orthodox reconstruction," the Ten Modes do exactly what I have just said the skeptic is not entitled to do. They begin by putting on display a great many oppositions among appearances. These oppositions may be due to differences in the perceivers – different animals (Mode 1), different humans (Mode 2), the different senses of a single human (Mode 3), or the different conditions (such as healthy or sick, young or old) in which the perceiver approaches the object (Mode 4) – or to differences in the things perceived – different quantities (Mode 7) or different cultural mores (Mode 10) – or to differences in both of these – different positions of observation (Mode 5),

[8] I touch on this in Chapters 8 and 11, but the fullest treatment in this volume is in Chapter 12, Section 2.

different mixtures (in the objects perceived and in the bodies of the perceivers) (Mode 6), or different frequencies of something's occurrence (in the perceiver's experience) (Mode 9).[9] The next step, according to this orthodox reconstruction, is to say that, from among any given set of these opposing appearances, we cannot prefer any one of them to any other. And this then leads to the conclusion that we must suspend judgment about what the objects of which these are the appearances are really like.[10] In other words, the Ten Modes are arguments to the effect that we ought to suspend judgment. But the problem with the orthodox reconstruction is that it does not seem to be consistent with Sextus' description of skepticism as an "ability,"[11] which, at least on the reading just suggested, makes suspension of judgment simply an effect produced, rather than the subject of the modal conclusion of an argument. It is also not consistent with his clear emphasis on the fact that the skeptic suspends judgment on all theoretical topics; to say that one *must* suspend judgment, because one cannot choose among the appearances, is actually to make a judgment, since it endorses certain norms concerning correct reasoning.

How, then, might one interpret the Ten Modes so that they do not fall afoul of Sextus' own skeptical attitude? Morison sees the Ten Modes as just giving us the starting points for constructing opposing arguments. They present us with opposing appearances, and these give us pointers to how one might generate opposing arguments concerning how the things in question actually are. For example, if someone says that honey is sweet, because that is how it tastes, one can argue with equal persuasiveness that honey is not sweet, and the Ten Modes give us suggestions for how that argument and many others like it can be developed.[12] And these opposing arguments can then be deployed in a manner quite consistent with the

[9] I follow Sextus' own classification of these differences (*PH* 1.38), which may be open to question in some cases. I have omitted the eighth Mode, the Mode from relativity, which Sextus classifies as having to do with both perceiver and object; there are a number of obscurities about its role in the Ten Modes. On this subject, the discussion in Annas and Barnes 1985, chapter 11, is still the best I am aware of. One of the complications is that a Mode involving relativity appears in both the Ten Modes and the Five Modes, and Sextus appears to connect them (*PH* 1.167). Brennan and Lee 2014 and Bullock 2016 both offer intriguing accounts of the Five that distinguish the relativity Mode in the Five from the one in the Ten; I return to this in the next section.

[10] Morison draws this reconstruction from Annas and Barnes 1985, Hankinson 1995, and Striker 1983 (Morison 2011, 287–9). It is not entirely clear that all of them fit the model he outlines in every respect. But if not, they at least leave open the possibility of being read this way; and in any case, this is a useful model to have on the table, for his purposes and for mine.

[11] As Morison 2011 emphasizes; this side of his interpretation seems to me absolutely correct.

[12] The example is Morison's (2011, 290–1), using an example in the fourth of the Ten Modes (*PH* 1.101).

picture of skepticism as an ability. Michael Williams offers another reading: the Ten Modes[13] do argue for conclusions closing off our grasp of the truth on all sorts of topics, but these must be understood as one side of a pair of opposing arguments, the other side being the positive arguments of the non-skeptical philosophers for a reliable criterion of truth, for how knowledge can be attained, and so on. In other words, as Williams puts it, the Modes are just an instance of Sextus' normal method, as applied in epistemology.[14]

These are both philosophically ingenious ways of rescuing Sextus from inconsistency. Unfortunately, they do not appear to fit the text. Contrary to Williams, Sextus is very clear that suspension of judgment comes from rehearsal of the considerations within each Mode all by itself, not by juxtaposing these Modes with the positive epistemologies of dogmatic philosophers. Every one of the Ten includes a remark (and often more than one) to the effect that suspension of judgment comes directly out of the opposing appearances just described; none of them says anything along the lines of "Now let's put this against the dogmatists' arguments on the other side, and *then* we'll get suspension of judgment." Such clarificatory remarks, in the context of stretches of negative argument, are not uncommon in Sextus,[15] but they do not feature at any point in his account of the Ten Modes. And contrary to Morison, the wording of many of these closing comments fits the orthodox reconstruction very nicely, but provides no hint of his own, more complicated reconstruction. The following are some of the most significant passages bearing on this issue.

> If the appearances turn out different given the variety of animals, and it is impossible to decide among them, it is necessary to suspend judgment about the external underlying things. (Mode 1, *PH* 1.61)

> If the non rational animals are no less trustworthy than us for the judging of appearances, and different appearances come about corresponding to the variety of the animals, I will be able to say how each of the underlying things appears to me, but as for how it is by nature, given what was said earlier, I will be compelled to suspend judgment. (Mode 1, *PH* 1.78)

> If the same things have different effects on account of the difference among humans, suspension of judgment would probably be introduced along these

[13] And, on Williams' view, also the Five, but I leave them aside for now.
[14] Williams 2010, especially 299–300; also Williams 1988, 578–9.
[15] *M* 7.443, 8.159–61, 298, 476–7, 9.137, 191, 10.168, PH 2.79, 130, 192, 3.29, 81, 135.

> lines too; we can maybe say how each of the underlying things appears, with respect to each difference, but we are not able to declare what it is in its nature . . . it is necessary, then, that suspension of judgment is introduced because of the difference among humans. (Mode 2, *PH* 1.87 9)

> We see, then, that in terms of this Mode too [namely, the one concerning mixtures], having no way to say anything about the nature of the external underlying things, we are compelled to suspend judgment. (Mode 6, *PH* 1.128)

> How each of the underlying things is in terms of its own nature and purely, we will not be able to say, though how it appears in relation to something, we will. From which follows our having to suspend judgment about the nature of the objects. (Mode 8, *PH* 1.140)

> Since such a great lack of uniformity among the objects is shown through this Mode too, we will not be able to say how the underlying thing is in terms of its nature, though how it appears in relation to this way of life or in relation to this law or in relation to this custom, and all the rest, we will. And for this reason it is necessary for us to suspend judgment about the nature of the external underlying objects. (Mode 10,*PH* 1.163)

In all these cases there is talk of how we cannot say how things really are, as opposed to how they appear, because of the differences in appearances dealt with in the Mode in question. And in all these cases we are told that, given this, suspension of judgment is something compulsory or necessary. Now, it is perhaps possible to read this as saying that the equal persuasiveness of the opposing appearances *results in* suspension of judgment, and that one could not expect anything else; and this would be consistent with the notion of skepticism as an ability to produce suspension of judgment as a psychological effect. Certainly the first part by itself – that we cannot choose among the appearances – would seem to allow this reading. But the talk of a compulsion or a necessity imposed on us, *because of* our failure to settle on any definite answers, is much more naturally read as referring to the recognition that suspension of judgment is the rationally required response to the argument that the Mode embodies. So the orthodox reconstruction seems to have quite a lot in its favor; it may not be compulsory (if I may borrow Sextus' language for my own purpose), but it certainly seems the easiest reading of the text. And besides, to return once more to Morison's model, the clear suggestion of all these passages is, to repeat, that this suspension of judgment comes directly from contemplation of the opposing appearances and the inability to choose between

them; neither here nor anywhere else does Sextus speak of these appearances as premises in opposing arguments.[16]

It looks, then, as if the Ten Modes are indeed inconsistent with Sextus' approach elsewhere: they are arguments for conclusions ("we must suspend judgment about X") of a sort that Sextus would not generally want to endorse.[17] One can certainly imagine the Ten Modes being used in the ways Morison and Williams suggest. But Sextus' exposition of the Ten Modes gives no indication that these are their aims, and consistent clear indications that they are meant to do something different – namely, to bring about suspension of judgment directly from the juxtaposition of opposing appearances. Moreover, he repeatedly seems to signal that the *way* in which they are supposed to do this is by forcing suspension of judgment as a rational necessity, which is incompatible with his account of skepticism as an ability applied to all subjects. There are exceptions to this; sometimes he says that, faced with the Ten Modes, "we end up at" (*katalêgomen eis*) suspension of judgment (*PH* 1.100, 163), and this can easily be understood as describing a simple result of the skeptical ability, involving no endorsement of conclusions or norms of rationality. Indeed, the same term was used in his opening account of the skeptical ability itself: he says that "The principle of the skeptical set-up is, above all, every

[16] Morison 2011, 291, does quote one passage of the same general kind (1.59) and cites the first of those above (1.61). He points out that remarks of this kind have given encouragement to the supporters of the orthodox reconstruction. He then says, "But the explanation of why we will or should suspend judgment on applying the modes needs to be sharply distinguished from the application of the mode itself, which is just a device for generating the opposition – a device for generating the premise of the opposing argument." However, in the absence of any textual indication that this is what the Ten Modes are (and Morison offers none), the reply to this seems to me to be simply "no, it doesn't"; what Sextus says in passages such as those I have quoted admits of a clear and easy reading of how the Modes are supposed to work, and it supports the orthodox reconstruction. Morison might respond that the textual support for his reading consists in the fact that it fits the way Sextus operates elsewhere, as he reconstructs this in the same article. But since the question here is precisely whether the Ten Modes are consistent with Sextus' procedure elsewhere, this would not be sufficient, regardless of the strength of his analysis of that procedure. I think our disagreement may come down to one of methodology: how far should one go to rescue an author's consistency? At least in the case of Sextus, I find positing inconsistency is often a small price to pay for textual fidelity. (But Morison would no doubt question that way of putting it.)

[17] Annas and Barnes 1994 uses the odd phrase "conclude to suspension of judgment" in their translation of the Ten Modes (*PH* 1.35, 99). I suspect the coinage "conclude to," used by no normal speaker of English, is a way of splitting the difference between a rationally mandated conclusion and a psychological effect. The Greek word, *sunagô*, allows this ambiguity; it can mean "conclude" in a logical sense, but it can also mean, in a broader sense, "bring about." Annas and Barnes' usage seems to have rubbed off on some other scholars: "conclude to" also appears in Sedley 2015, 174, and Morison 2011, 289. (On "conclude to," the following tidbit online (accessed June 14, 2018) is instructive: www.englishforums.com/English/ConcludeTo/vkdxn/post.htm.)

argument's having an equal argument lying in opposition to it;[18] for from this we seem to end up (*katalêgein eis*) at not having doctrines" (*PH* 1.12). But much more often, as I have illustrated, Sextus points to an understanding of the Ten Modes that saddles them with intellectual commitments one would expect him not to want.

I do not think there is anything especially worrisome about this. The Ten Modes, as we have said, derive from Aenesidemus, who belonged to a quite different phase in the history of Pyrrhonism, and it is quite possible that they were devised to address concerns rather different from those animating Sextus himself. One point that is apparent in most of the passages quoted above, but in many others in the course of the Ten Modes, is a contrast between how things are *by nature* – also characterized as how they are "purely" (*eilikrinôs*, *PH* 1.140) – and how they appear in certain circumstances or in relation to certain other things. The idea seems to be that the nature of a thing would be the way that thing is independently of any particular circumstances – the way it is *invariably*, as one might put it; and since we do only perceive things in certain circumstances or relations, we can never achieve a view of them of this "pure" kind. This contrast between how things are by nature and how they are relatively speaking also appears several times in Diogenes Laertius' version of the Ten Modes (9.85, 86, 87), and Diogenes has no hesitation in stating as conclusions of these Modes that this nature cannot be known. In this connection, it is also striking that Sextus speaks of relativity as the most general description of the Ten Modes (*PH* 1.39), even though the Mode from Relativity is also one of the individual Modes (the eighth in Sextus, although Diogenes puts it last, which again perhaps gives it a special significance).[19]

This conception of a thing's nature, and this emphasis on relativity, are not characteristic of Sextus' usual approach. This is not surprising, since to speak of what it is for something to be by nature a certain way seems, by his usual standards, like an exercise in dogmatic metaphysics. As has often been noticed, he is normally much more interested in generating a state of *undecidability*, where opposing positions strike one as equally forceful. And it is striking that Sextus frequently introduces considerations from the Five

[18] Not "the *claim that* to every account an equal account is opposed," as Annas and Barnes have it. There is nothing in the Greek corresponding to "claim," which too readily suggests adherence to some kind of thesis. Sextus is in the business of producing a state of affairs – that of equal arguments lying in opposition to one another – not making claims. On this, see Williams 2010, 295, and I am grateful to Michael Williams for discussion of this point.

[19] On this, see again the works cited in note 9.

Modes, in which undecidability is central, into his presentation of the Ten Modes. This may make his version of the Ten Modes more congenial to his own usual procedures; but it cannot have been how the Ten Modes looked originally, since the Five Modes are from a later period, and Diogenes' version of the Ten Modes contains no such intrusions. However, Sextus' periodic use of the Five Modes within the Ten does not make the focus on relativity and natures disappear. For this reason, I suspect that his attitude to the Ten may in the end have been not so different from his attitude to the Eight Modes on causal explanation: they are a relic of an earlier period with which he is not really comfortable. One source of his discomfort may have been this seemingly dogmatic conception of a thing's nature; another may have been the matter on which I focused earlier – the fact that they look like arguments with conclusions to be endorsed, rather than exercises of the skeptical ability. We have no indication that Aenesidemus spoke of skepticism as an ability. But by Sextus' time, Pyrrhonism may have moved on – become more sophisticated, if you like.

Jonathan Barnes has described the Ten Modes as "puerile."[20] But this may depend on what they were really designed to do. In the hands of Aenesidemus, a host of observations about the conflicting ways in which things appear in different circumstances (where "circumstances" covers all the differences in perceivers and things perceived that we noted earlier) – all contributing to the idea that there is never any insight into the way things are that is not mediated by particular features of the viewer, the object, or both – may have served very well his aim of showing that we are cut off from any grasp of the true nature of things, in his understanding of what that means. I have illustrated in more detail how this may have worked, with reference to one of the Ten Modes (Mode 5, on places and positions), in one of the other chapters in this volume.[21]

But the subject matter of the Ten Modes is not so well suited to Sextus' own usual goals. Sextus certainly shares the view that the appearances are all we have to rely on, and this is crucial to his account of how the skeptic can act (*PH* 1.21–4). But specific everyday appearances, of the kinds that are at the heart of the Ten Modes, do not play any significant role in Sextus' normal approach to his material. This is because his main interest, outside of book 1 of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, is in the general principles of the subjects he is addressing, and in the theories of non-skeptical philosophers about these principles and how they may be (or fail to be) established. Several times, and in all three of his surviving works, he expresses a

[20] Annas and Barnes 1994/2000, in the introduction to the 2nd edition, xviii. [21] See Chapter 5.

preference for arguing at the most general level possible (*PH* 2.84, 3.1, *M* 9.1–2, *M* 1.39–40). By "principles" (*archai*) he may mean either the foundational claims or the basic entities in a certain area of inquiry; but his concentration on general questions rather than particulars is consistent across his writings.[22] Thus the topics he deals with are such things as (to take a few cases from each of the three parts of philosophy) the existence or nature of criteria of truth, signs, demonstrations, god, motion, place, time, or good and bad. This does not preclude his going into detail on some topic. But the details generally take the forms of exegesis of dogmatic theories – for example, Stoic views on "sayables" (*lekta*) (*M* 8.70–4), or Philo's and Diodorus' views on conditionals (*M* 8.113–18), or Pythagorean ideas about number and its significance (*M* 10. 249–84), or the building blocks of grammar (*M* 1.99–120), or the elements of astrology (*M* 5.4–42). And this is always in the service of undermining those theories and thereby putting into question the very existence of the purported science they belong to or the purported entities with which it deals. And for this purpose, observations about the different ways things look to people in different circumstances, or from different positions, or depending on the quantities in which they are presented – to take just a few examples from the Ten Modes (4, 5, and 7, respectively) – are not likely to be of much interest.

I think this may be at the heart of why Sextus rarely appeals to the Ten Modes outside the first book of *Outlines*. It is not just that they take the form of arguments for conclusions, or that they appeal to a seemingly dogmatic conception of something's nature. Those features could perhaps be ironed out and, as we have seen, Sextus seems to make at least some effort to do so, though the job is by no means complete. But even apart from those factors, the Ten Modes are just not particularly relevant to what he is trying to do. He sometimes has reason to discuss the unreliability of the senses, and in such cases it may be useful to mention the Ten Modes as support, as he does a few times (*PH* 2.55–6, 3.50, *M* 7.345). In one place he introduces the idea that one should not look to majority opinion as a guide to the truth, and alludes to a discussion of the same point in the course of the second Mode (*PH* 2.45, referring back to 1.89). And in one place he brings up the fourth Mode, on differences in circumstances, to warn against trying to define what a human being is ostensively, by pointing to individual human beings

[22] I have said a little more about this in the introduction to Bett 2018b, 21–2.

(*PH* 2.25). These are the *only* explicit references to the Ten Modes that I have found in the rest of his work.

In addition, there is an extended rehash of the kind of material in the tenth Mode, on ethical and religious practices and beliefs, in the section of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* devoted to ethics (*PH* 3.198–234), although here Sextus makes no explicit back reference to the Ten Modes. The tenth Mode may be more helpful to him than the others. Unlike the other nine, it has to do not with differing sense perceptions,[23] but with differing attitudes about ethical and religious matters; and, for reasons that we need not get into here, he finds ethical disagreement among ordinary people an important impetus to suspending judgment about whether anything is really good or bad – which is the central question he addresses in the ethical portion of his work (*PH* 3.168–238, *M* 11.1–167). There is no counterpart to this in logic or physics, or in the non-philosophical disciplines he examines in *Against Those in the Disciplines*; differing perceptual appearances, the subject of the other nine Modes, are simply not to the point in the same central manner, and so the Ten Modes do not serve his purpose except in the incidental ways I have just noted.[24]

II

The Five Modes are much more general, and this already makes them much more suited to Sextus' purpose, for the reasons just suggested. They are also systematically connected in a way that the Ten Modes are not.[25] The Five Modes are (1) Dispute with no resolution, (2) Infinite Regress, (3) Relativity, (4) Hypothesis, and (5) the Reciprocal Mode. The first of these sums up the kind of outcome Sextus is always aiming for: we have a

[23] As noted by Morison 2011, n. 24.

[24] There is a passing mention, at the end of *Against the Physicists*' discussion of god, of disagreement about the gods in ordinary life, as a supplement to a long series of arguments against the existence of gods (*M* 9.192). Interestingly, this too is closer to the tenth mode than to the other nine (though again, there is no actual mention of the Ten Modes); although the topic of god belongs for philosophers under physics, in ordinary life religion clearly has a connection with ethics. But this is clearly a special case. God, like ethics, is a subject on which ordinary people have views, reflective or not, and these may differ; this is not the case with any of the other topics in logic, physics, or the special disciplines.

[25] The first four of the Ten Modes form a gradually narrowing sequence, as Sextus makes clear (*PH* 1.79, 91, 100). Beyond this (and aside from the generalizing function of the relativity Mode noted earlier), while there may be reasons for ordering them in a particular way, each one stands independently of the others. On the different orders in Sextus, Diogenes, and our other sources of information, see Annas and Barnes 1985, 29, and Sedley 2015, 179. The main difference is that Annas and Barnes start from Sextus, Sedley from Diogenes; but there are also a few places where they disagree, and I would regard Sedley's version as an improvement.

set of conflicting views on some subject and no way to choose between them,[26] so we are drawn to suspension of judgment. And the other four sum up ways one might try to escape this condition, and the challenges each faces. The third Mode, from Relativity, has often been thought not to belong here, or to belong in some untidy way with the initial Mode from Dispute. But Sextus (*PH* 1.165–9) and Diogenes (9.88–9) both summarize the Five Modes in the same order, with Relativity between Infinite Regress and Hypothesis, and this cannot be a coincidence;[27] this must be the canonical Pyrrhonist order. A pair of recent articles has provided important new insight into this matter, and I follow their lead.[28] The unfolding of the various possibilities, in broad outline, goes as follows.

Suppose someone puts forward some claim that purports to establish the truth of one of the conflicting views over the others. Then the question can be raised, what is your basis for that claim? And if some further claim is advanced in response to that question, the same question can be raised about the further claim; and this can in principle go on forever – hence Infinite Regress. But now, at some point the interlocutor may refuse to keep trying to justify claims on the basis of other claims, and may insist that some claims do not need support beyond themselves. This may be because some claims are self-supporting – they establish their own veracity – or it may be that some claims simply do not need support – their veracity is somehow a given. Against the first possibility the skeptic launches the Mode of Relativity, which argues that no claim can support itself; justification is always by means of something other than the claim being justified, and hence is always *relative to* something else.[29] And

[26] The word *anepikritos*, used here and frequently elsewhere in Sextus, can be translated "undecidable" or "undecided." The former may suggest unwelcome intellectual commitments similar to those I discussed in the previous section, whereas the latter may seem too weak for Sextus' purposes. The proposal of Powers (2010), section III, that an *anepikritos* dispute is one *with no arbitrator* (*epikritês*), because everyone is a party to the dispute, is an attractive middle way.

[27] Nor is it due to Diogenes, the later of the two, copying Sextus; the language and formulation of the two versions are sufficiently different that Diogenes must be drawing on some other source.

[28] Brennan and Lee 2014 and Bullock 2016. The two differ on some details, but they are in general agreement about the function of the Relativity Mode, at least as the Five Modes were originally designed. (Brennan and Lee 2014, but not Bullock, think Sextus misunderstands this, and I return to this point below.)

[29] Both Brennan and Lee 2014 and Bullock 2016 rely for this reading on Diogenes Laertius' summary of this Mode: "The Relativity mode says that nothing is grasped by itself, but with something else – hence that they are unknown" (9.89). On this understanding, "in relation to something" (*pros ti*) is used as equivalent to "with something else" (*meth'heterou*), which is quite intelligible, but somewhat different from the ways in which relativity is appealed to in the Ten Modes. For this reason I think Brennan and Lee 2014 are right that, if Sextus is referring back to the relativity Mode in the Ten Modes when he describes the relativity Mode in the Five, as if they are the same, he is making a mistake. And it certainly looks as if this is what he is doing with his "as we have said before"

against the second possibility comes the Mode of Hypothesis, which argues that if someone puts forward a claim without support, that is just arbitrarily plumping for something; if one person hypothesizes P in that way, someone else can just as well hypothesize not-P. Finally, suppose the interlocutor accepts that the original claim does need support, but argues that, rather than this leading to an infinite regress, two claims can be mutually supporting.[30] Against this attempt the skeptic introduces the Reciprocal Mode, which argues that this amounts to saying "P because Q, and Q because P," which is hopeless. At this point, then, all the Modes have been deployed, and the interlocutor has no more options; all the possible moves for establishing something have been blocked.

So, at least, the exponent of the Five Modes will presume. Of course, an epistemological foundationalist would disagree, and would challenge the dismissal of foundational claims that is encapsulated in the Modes of Relativity and Hypothesis. But it is hard to deny that the Five Modes taken together constitute a formidable challenge to any positive justificatory project. Now, how does Sextus intend them? One question is whether he intends them as free-standing arguments, or whether they are themselves intended as one side of a pair of opposing arguments, with the dogmatists' case on the other side. And here, unlike in the case of the Ten, the answer is clearly the latter. The Five Modes are explicitly set up as a response to some piece of dogmatic theorizing; the dogmatist puts forward certain contentions, and the Five Modes then throw these into question. There is, then, an inherently oppositional character to the Five Modes; they are designed as a counterweight to argumentative activity that is already under way.[31]

Another question is the one we spent some time over with the Ten Modes, now applied to the Five: whether Sextus intends to make

(*PH* 1.167). Besides, his reference to the need to suspend judgment about something's *nature*, and his accompanying observation that appearances are always relative to the perceiving subject or the circumstances of perception (*PH* 1.167), repeat considerations that we saw in the Ten Modes, but that seem quite irrelevant in the context of the Five (hence the dismissiveness of most scholars about relativity in the Five).

[30] I follow Bullock 2016, 425–7, on this. The reciprocal Mode is often understood as an objection to circular arguments in general. But Bullock emphasizes that only two claims are ever mentioned when this Mode is appealed to; what it is attacking is the idea that one claim can be a necessary and sufficient condition for another – as indeed the name, literally, "the through-one-another mode" (*ho diallêlos* [or *di'allêlôn*] *tropos*), suggests.

[31] Hence Michael Williams' contention that the Modes apply the method of opposition in epistemology seems much more plausible in the case of the Five Modes than the Ten (cf. note 13 and accompanying text); the Ten Modes work all by themselves, whereas the Five work in reaction to someone else's philosophical theorizing.

suspension of judgment a rational requirement, with the problem of consistency that brings with it, or whether he means them simply to generate suspension of judgment as an outcome. The Five Modes in Sextus' presentation give the initial impression, like the Ten, of being a series of connected arguments for a definite conclusion, and in this case, a much more comprehensive one along the following lines: that establishing the truth of any theory is impossible, and that suspension of judgment is the only justifiable stance. And several times in the course of the chapter introducing the Five Modes, he uses the same language of necessity or compulsion that, as we saw in the case of the Ten, seemed to reinforce that conclusion (*PH* 1.170, 175, 177). But this language is not as prominent as in the exposition of the Ten Modes; and it is striking that in his initial run-through of the Five – the one following what I called the canonical order – Sextus consistently speaks of suspension of judgment in the simple indicative, as something that "we do." Concerning the first of the Five Modes, he uses a phrase I already drew attention to in the previous section, saying that "we end up at" (*katalêgomen eis*, *PH* 1.165) suspension of judgment. For the others the language is "suspension of judgment follows" (*tên epochên akolouthein*, 1.166 – Mode 2) and "we suspend judgment" (*epechomen*, 1.167, 169 – Modes 3 and 5).[32] And this, as we have seen, allows us to conceive of suspension of judgment not as a rational requirement, but as an outcome of the skeptic's ability with no intellectual commitments attached. Recent scholarship has shown ways in which the Five Modes may be understood as challenging or undermining dogmatic projects of justification, where the emphasis is on preventing anything from being settled, rather than on settling for some negative conclusion.[33] This would fit, then, with the terms in which he initially presents them; the skeptic introduces arguments such that "we end up at" a position of not knowing what to say. And there are fewer obstacles to such a non-dogmatic (that is, genuinely skeptical) interpretation than there were in the case of the Ten.

The one place in Sextus, outside the chapter that introduces the Five Modes, where all five are used together is the passage I mentioned near the beginning, where he applies the Five Modes to questions of causal explanation, immediately after having listed Aenesidemus' Eight Modes on that subject (*PH* 1.185–6). And here too he speaks of the Modes as a series of results, rather than a series of arguments forcing one to assent to a conclusion. Infinite Regress and the Reciprocal Mode are conditions that

[32] There is no explicit comment on the outcome of the fourth Mode, Hypothesis (*PH* 1.168).
[33] Bullock 2016; Brennan and Roberts 2018, section 5.

one falls into (*ekpeseitai* . . . *eis*, *PH* 1.186), while someone who posits something by hypothesis, given the Mode of Hypothesis, "will have their judgment suspended" (*epischesthêsetai*, 1.186 – this is the passive form of the verb *epechô*, "suspend judgment," corresponding to the noun *epochê*).[34]

The Five Modes, then, seem somewhat more easily amenable to Sextus' usual skeptical method. It is striking, however, that while appeal to the forms of argument in one or more of the Five Modes is, as I noted at the outset, very common in Sextus, he only once uses all five together. It looks as if one reason for this is because he does not really understand the function of the Mode of Relativity. Although he introduces the Five Modes in what must have been the standard order, the chapter on the Five Modes immediately follows by expanding on how they can be used on any topic (*PH* 1.169–77). Here he twice goes through the sequence of five, once as applied to objects of perception and once to objects of thought. And here the order is changed; in both cases we now have Dispute, Infinite Regress, Reciprocal Mode, Hypothesis, Relativity. In most respects this is of no great importance; once the Mode of Dispute is on the table, the order in which one introduces the various possible ways of escaping from it, and why they fail, makes little difference. The one exception is that in both cases the Mode of Relativity is tacked on at the end, and this is because Sextus clearly has no sense of how it is to be connected with the other four. He simply says that objects of thought are relative to the perceiver or the thinker (*PH* 1.175, 177), which has nothing to do with the series of steps traced by the other four Modes – and nothing specially to do with challenging dogmatic projects of justification, which is what the Five Modes are centrally concerned with. Indeed, he said the same thing about the Relativity Mode when first mentioning it (*PH* 1.167); following other recent scholarship, I relied on Diogenes Laertius' wording of this Mode, not Sextus' own, when I explained its role in the standard order (including the point of its position alongside the Mode of Hypothesis).[35] In two other places we can find Sextus using four of the Five Modes

[34] Brennan and Lee 2014, 261, translate "will be forced to suspend judgment." I am nervous of this wording, because (though I have no reason to think they meant this) it might suggest a response to rationally compelling considerations. There is no language of necessity here in the Greek (*anagkê*, *dein*, etc.), as there was in the numerous passages in the Ten Modes where it seemed as if that was going on.

[35] See again note 29 and accompanying text. Much of the present paragraph is indebted to Brennan and Lee 2014. However, the observations about Sextus' procedure within the chapter on the Five Modes are my own addition.

together (*PH* 2.19–20, 2.85).[36] And in both places, it is no surprise that the one missing is the Relativity Mode; Sextus clearly doesn't know what to do with it.

Here, then, is one reason why we almost never see Sextus using all five together. But it is not the only reason. For aside from the passages I have cited, as far as I can see, we never see him using even four together; elsewhere we only see one or two (or in a single place, perhaps three).[37] It looks as if he is not particularly interested in the systematic potential of the Five Modes, even though, in introducing them, he made very clear that they do fit together as a comprehensive system of argument. He prefers to pick and choose individual arguments from this system to make limited points at particular stages in his dialectic.

I can think of two reasons why this might be his preferred approach. One recalls a point that I made earlier: the Five Modes taken as a system can give the impression of being a knock-down argument to the effect that justification can never get started, and this would be a form of negative dogmatism, not skepticism – like the position that, in the opening sentences of the *Outlines* (*PH* 1.1–3), he accuses the Academics of taking. As we have seen, there are ways of reading the intent of the Five Modes that would keep them skeptical by Sextus' lights. But the use of them as a system may still have had an uncomfortably doctrinal feel to him, especially if it is a repeated use; and this may have encouraged him almost always to use them piecemeal, not all together, even if that was how they were designed.

[36] Brennan and Lee 2014, 260, say that "there are only two passages that clearly employ multiple modes in concert" – namely, the first of the passages I just cited, plus the chapter on causal explanation considered in the previous paragraph. I would not necessarily dispute this; *PH* 2.85 is less clear. But there are clearly references to dispute, the Reciprocal Mode, and Infinite Regress; and although Hypothesis is not mentioned by name, I think one can see it implicitly in operation when Sextus says that "the person who says that something is true, if saying this without demonstration, will not be believed because of the dispute."

[37] I give further details later. Brennan and Lee 2014, 260, doubt whether we should see "arguments from infinite regress, or allegations of question-begging" as applications of the Five Modes at all, since "arguments of both sorts predate Agrippa by many centuries." They are of course right about the last point. It is also true that using one or two of the sorts of argument that figure in the Five Modes is rather different from using the whole set together, which, as explained earlier, is meant to challenge all possible avenues of justification; indeed, I suspect this is one reason why Sextus mostly chooses to avoid the latter procedure – more on this shortly. However, since Sextus introduces these forms of argument as typical skeptical resources when he introduces the Five Modes, it is natural to think of them, in Sextus' hands, as Five Modes material, whether or not they occur in groups, and it is hard not to think that Sextus would have expected this of his readers. However, there is admittedly some indeterminacy as to when he is appealing to one or more of the Five Modes and when he is not, and I will return to this point as well.

The second reason is not so much the possibly dogmatic character, but the *global* character, of the Five Modes. As Sextus stresses (*PH* 1.169), they can be used on any topic. They are wholly general in scope, so that it really makes no difference what subject they are applied to in any given case; whatever the subject, a dispute is generated, and then various possible ways of establishing one of the disputed positions are blocked. It is this global character that has made the Five Modes[38] a matter of interest for many contemporary epistemologists; they pose a challenge to the possibility of knowledge in general. But Sextus does not proceed in this way. Although his tendency is to concentrate on the basic principles of a subject – which, as I said, makes the general styles of argument in each of the Five Modes more useful to him than the highly specific examples that make up the Ten Modes – he also wants to examine each subject one by one, often at considerable length. Rather than shutting down discussion with a single, all-encompassing argument, he wants to keep the conversation going, perhaps indefinitely. And this is another reason why he almost entirely avoids using the Five Modes as a system.

Jonathan Barnes finds this a cause for criticism. "The Five Modes," he says, "if they deliver anything at all, deliver all that Sextus could possibly want: the local efforts which fill Books II and III [of the *Outlines* – and, we could add, all the other eleven of his surviving books] are perfectly unnecessary: once you are sure that in answer to any question whatever, you must suspend judgement, why bother to ask whether anything causes anything or whether anything is naturally good or bad? The answers to these questions are already determined; and all you can do is waste ink."[39] But I think this fundamentally misunderstands what Sextus is up to. First of all, he is not interested in arguing to the secure conclusion that "you must suspend judgment" on any topic; as we saw earlier, that is actually inconsistent with suspension of judgment. But even if we correct for this, and instead speak of generating suspension of judgment as an effect, this is not an effect that Sextus expects or wishes to produce once and for all. Skepticism is an *ongoing* activity; suspension of judgment is generated again and again, on one topic after another, by an ever-renewed exercise of the skeptical ability.

[38] Or, strictly speaking, three of the Five – Infinite Regress, Hypothesis, and the Reciprocal Mode (understood as circularity, cf. note 30) – which together are known today as "the Agrippan trilemma." The Mode from Dispute is ignored as just setting up the situation that the positive theorist is supposed to resolve, and Relativity is ignored because it has not been well understood.

[39] Annas and Barnes 1994/2000, xxvi–xxvii of Barnes' introduction to the 2nd edition.

Barnes sees Sextus' skepticism as both global and local; global insofar as it has the Five Modes, local insofar as it engages in piecemeal argumentation on specific topics. He finds the global tendency much the more philosophically respectable of the two. But as I have argued in other chapters in this volume,[40] Sextus is not a philosopher, in the usual sense of the term.[41] And it seems to me that the global tendency is in fact extremely limited in Sextus. Yes, he describes the Five Modes as a group. But then he almost never uses them in that way; he uses individual Modes in particular argumentative moves on particular topics, but the global potential of the Five Modes together is almost completely ignored once it has been mentioned. Like the other sets of Modes, the Five are part of Pyrrhonism's history; and he does have a good deal of use for them as individual arguments. But this is in the service of an unending process of exhibiting arguments in opposition to one another, all with the aim of maintaining continued suspension of judgment, and hence continued *ataraxia*. The last thing he wants to do is to shut this down, as the Five Modes employed as a system would threaten to do.

I close with a few observations on how Sextus does in fact use individual members of the Five Modes. It is often suggested that he uses them all over the place, irrespective of topic. But in fact his use of them is very much more common in contexts that we would call epistemological than anywhere else.[42] This clearly makes a good deal of sense; while it is of course possible to question the basis for some claim no matter what the topic – so that the Five Modes could in principle be relevant in any area of inquiry – it is when questions about the justification of claims and theories are themselves the subject that they are most likely to be useful. Now, it is not always quite clear, in a given case, whether we should say that he is appealing to these Modes. It is interesting that the only one he regularly refers to by name, including the word "mode," is the Reciprocal Mode (*diallêlos tropos* in *Outlines*, *di'allêllôn tropos* in the other works[43]).

[40] See especially Chapter 2; also Chapter 1.

[41] Commenting on the fact that Sextus does not seem to be searching for the truth, Barnes says that "this is my chief criticism of him as a philosopher" (Annas and Barnes 1994/2000, xxx in the second edition). It is not entirely clear whether "as a philosopher" refers to Sextus or to Barnes himself as the critic; but I assume it is the former. If so, and assuming the same conception of philosophy in which it is essentially a search for truth, Sextus could simply reply, "Whatever made you mistake me for a philosopher?"

[42] This was noticed by Williams 1988, 578; otherwise it seems not to have received much attention.

[43] This shift of terminology is interesting in itself. *Di'allêlôn*, "through one another," is ordinary Greek vocabulary; *diallêlos* is an adjective coined from this and used only by philosophers and grammarians. *Diallêlos* has other usages besides this skeptical one. But it is clearly a relatively rare

Otherwise, he frequently uses the words "to infinity" (*eis apeiron*), sometimes "dispute without resolution" (*anepikritos diaphônia*), and occasionally "hypothesis" (*hupothesis*); but he often appeals to the same forms of argument without using these terms, and he rarely if ever calls them Modes. I suspect this is because the Reciprocal Mode is a rather specific and arguably technical argumentative construction, whereas the others, at least as individual forms of argument, might easily occur to any thoughtful person – and could be captured colloquially by "prove it!," "there's no way to decide," and "you're just *saying* that," respectively. In any case, this looseness in Sextus' language is one reason why there is room for disagreement about how often he is using these Modes. Allowing for this, however, my rough count across his works yields the following results.

Against the Logicians (*M* 7–8) is about the criterion of truth, truth itself, signs, and demonstration. Following the introduction to the entire sequence of books *Against the Logicians*, *Physicists*, and *Ethicists* (*M* 7.1–24), and an introduction to the topic of the criterion (*M* 7.25–45), it begins with a long historical survey of views concerning the criterion of truth (*M* 7.46–260). I see no occurrence of the Five Modes in any of these segments. But across the rest of *Against the Logicians* – the arguments against the criterion of truth (*M* 7.261–445), and the other topics (*M* 8) – I find a total of twenty-one places where one or more of the Five Modes are appealed to.[44] In the treatment of the same topics in book 2 of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (*PH* 2.1–192) I find fourteen places.[45] But there are no occurrences in the remainder of that book (*PH* 2.193–259), where, unlike anywhere in *Against the Logicians*, issues that we would consider logical,

technical term and it is confined to later antiquity. Some readers can no doubt guess what I am going to say next: the fact that *PH* uses *diallêlos*, whereas the other works use *di'allêlôn*, fits rather nicely with the view that *PH* is the latest of Sextus' works. I don't insist on this – one can always think of reasons why Sextus might have made the shift of vocabulary in the other direction – but it does seem to me suggestive.

[44] *M* 7.315 (Hypothesis), 339 (Hypothesis, Infinite Regress), 340 (Infinite Regress), 341 (Reciprocal), 426 (Reciprocal), 429 (Infinite Regress), 8.16 (Infinite Regress), 19 (Infinite Regress), 21–2 (Infinite Regress, Reciprocal), 28–9 (Reciprocal, Infinite Regress), 50 (Infinite Regress), 78 (Infinite Regress), 86 (Reciprocal), 122 (Reciprocal), 257 (Dispute), 261 (Reciprocal), 347 (Infinite Regress), 370 (Hypothesis), 379 (Reciprocal), 436 (Hypothesis), 464 (Hypothesis). It will be noticed that some of these passages are very close to one another. My principle of individuation, here and in the following notes, is simple: two or more Modes count as a single occurrence if they figure as part of a single connected argument, but as separate occurrences if they figure in separate arguments.

[45] *PH* 2.19–20 (Dispute, Reciprocal, Hypothesis, Infinite Regress), 35–6 (Hypothesis, Reciprocal, Infinite Regress), 56 (Dispute, plus some allusions to the Ten Modes, as noted earlier), 68 (Reciprocal), 78 (Infinite Regress), 85 (Dispute, Hypothesis, Infinite Regress, Reciprocal), 89 (Infinite Regress), 90 (Infinite Regress), 91–3 (Infinite Regress, Reciprocal), 113–14 (Dispute, Reciprocal), 124 (Infinite Regress), 128 (Infinite Regress), 182 (Infinite Regress), 183 (Reciprocal).

rather than epistemological, are the main focus of attention. As for Sextus' treatments of physics and ethics, I see one occurrence in *Against the Physicists* (*M* 9–10), three in *Against the Ethicists* (*M* 11), and five in Book 3 of *Outlines*, all of them in the physical rather than the ethical portion.[46] As for *Against Those in the Disciplines* (*M* 1–6), I find a total of six occurrences.[47] I think the pattern is pretty clear.

Two other, less obvious points seem to emerge from these data. First, the occurrence of Five Modes material is rather more frequent, page for page, in *Outlines* than in the other works.[48] For the present purpose, I assume that the average length of the numbered sections of Sextus is more or less even across all his works. Then, if we take books 2 and 3 of *Outlines* versus the five books *Against the Logicans*, *Physicists*, and *Ethicists*, we have 19 occurrences in 540 sections versus 25 in 1,975 sections, or, on average, 3.5 occurrences per 100 sections versus 1.3. And if we limit ourselves just to the epistemological portions where these occurrences are much more frequent, we have 14 in 192 sections versus 21 in 667,[49] or 7.3 per 100 sections versus 3.1. The second point is that *Outlines* shows a rather greater readiness to use more than one of the Five Modes in combination. As will be apparent from the citations in footnotes to the previous paragraph, there are three places in *Against the Logicians*, *Physicists*, and *Ethicists* where two Modes are employed together, whereas in books 2 and 3 of *Outlines* there are seven using at least two (where, again, the relative length of these stretches of text is 1,975 versus 540 sections). Moreover, as far as I can see, *Against the Logicans*, *Physicists*, and *Ethicists* never use more than two together. On the other hand, as we saw earlier, *Outlines* twice uses four together, and there is another case (*PH* 2.35–6) where I think we can see three; Infinite Regress and the Reciprocal Mode are plainly present, but the twice-stated point that someone who speaks *akritôs*, "without making a judgment," will not be credible, seems to me a slightly loose case of the Mode of Hypothesis.

[46] *M* 9.47 (Reciprocal), 11.183 (Reciprocal), 229 (Dispute), 230 (Dispute), *PH* 3.8 (Infinite Regress), 22 (Reciprocal), 24 (Infinite Regress), 35–6 (Reciprocal, Infinite Regress), 53 (Infinite Regress, Reciprocal).

[47] *M* 1.157 (Hypothesis, Reciprocal), 180/183 (Infinite Regress, introduced in 180 and referred back to in 183), 2.109 (Infinite Regress), 3.7–17 (Hypothesis – this is an extended critique of the legitimacy of hypothesis), 97 (Reciprocal), 99 (Reciprocal).

[48] In what follows, I leave aside *Against Those in the Disciplines*. Given its distinct subject matter, comparing it with the other works is less significant than comparing the logical, physical, and ethical portions of the other two works with one another. But in any case, the very small number of uses of Five Mode material in this work makes it obvious that *PH* is far ahead of it in this respect.

[49] In these counts I include just the epistemological, not the logical parts of *PH* 2, and I omit the first half of *M* 7 (1–260); on this, see the previous paragraph.

What are we to make of these discrepancies between *Outlines* and the other works? I think it is fair to connect them both with the "outline" character of the work, of which Sextus frequently reminds us. As we have seen, the Five Modes are designed to shut down attempts at establishing a thesis. If Sextus used them too much, that might even have made the whole exercise of considering individual philosophical doctrines pointless. Contrary to what Jonathan Barnes would apparently have preferred, Sextus does not want to go in this direction; he likes long, discursive treatments of multiple topics, and this is of a piece with his understanding of skepticism as an "ability." But the nature of the Five Modes is such that, the more often one uses them, and the more one uses them in combination with one another, the quicker one can wrap up an argument. Another way to look at this is that introducing one of the Five Modes is really a way of *mentioning* an argument without actually going through it in detail; if you say "Infinite Regress" or "Reciprocal Mode," you are gesturing at an extended line of reasoning that then does not have to be spelled out. Of course, Sextus often does give a few details about how these forms of reasoning will play out as regards the topic under discussion; but once the relevant Mode has been mentioned, the extent to which he does so is more or less optional. For all these reasons, then, it is understandable that *Outlines*, which is deliberately being brief (in Sextus' rather generous conception of brevity), would appeal to the Five Modes more often, and to more of them at once, than do Sextus' other works.

III

The results of this study are, from one point of view, rather disappointing: the Modes are nowhere near as important as they sound when Sextus introduces them in the first book of *Outlines*. The Eight Modes are an embarrassment; the Ten Modes are ill-suited to Sextus' general aims, and largely ignored after he has given his exposition; and the Five Modes, while certainly of much greater interest to him, are also not particularly congenial to him if used in the systematic fashion that Agrippa, whoever he was, apparently intended – Sextus prefers to use them in bits and pieces. But this just illustrates that Sextus belongs near the end of a long tradition of Pyrrhonist skepticism. He carries a lot of historical baggage to which he feels some loyalty. At the same time, much of this baggage he does not seem to find especially useful. We could surely make more sense of this if our evidence concerning Pyrrhonism, beyond the works of Sextus himself, was not so limited; I have made some effort here to understand

Aenesidemus' intentions as opposed to those of Sextus, but much concerning the historical tradition of Pyrrhonism is bound to remain murky. In this situation, it may be as well to remember that what Sextus says he is doing, and what he actually does, may not always perfectly align with one another, and that the reason for this may not be incompetence on his part, but historical factors that we cannot expect to understand in more than an "outline" fashion.

CHAPTER 7

What Kind of Self Can a Greek Skeptic Have?

I have always had difficulty understanding talk about the self; precisely what is being referred to by the term has always seemed to me elusive. And so, in beginning work on this chapter, I did what I do not generally encourage my students to do: I looked up the word in the dictionary. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the following overlapping series of definitions: "That which in a person is really and intrinsically *he* (in contradistinction to what is adventitious); the ego (often identified with the soul or mind as opposed to the body); a permanent subject of successive and varying states of consciousness." Even aside from the sexism of the first definition, this set of definitions has a very archaic ring to it; it is perhaps no surprise that, although it was the 1971 edition that I consulted, the most recent of the examples of the word's usage that followed the definitions was from 1909. For the claim that there is some group of features that constitute the real or intrinsic character, or the essence, of a person; the notion of a strong form of personal identity inhering solely in psychological, and not at all in physical, features of a person; and the suggestion that there is any such thing as "a permanent subject of successive and varying states of consciousness" – all these ideas have been the objects of severe and widespread philosophical suspicion for a long time (indeed, since long before 1909, one of their most vocal detractors being Hume). If *that* is what is meant by the self, it might well seem that the question of whether an ancient Greek skeptic can lay claim to such a thing is of no great interest. If that is what the self is supposed to be, one might say, then of course no ancient Greek skeptic would want such a thing; but this creates no problem for skeptics in particular, since we all manage quite satisfactorily without it.

Yet many scholars have felt that there *is* something problematic about what we could call the *personhood* of the Greek skeptic. Myles Burnyeat, for example, has spoken of the skeptic as committed to "a detachment

from oneself."[1] Despite all that the skeptics themselves, especially Sextus Empiricus, say about how normal the skeptic's existence is, it has often seemed that there is something not quite human about the skeptic's approach to life. In what follows, I want to try to get a better grasp of this widespread feeling, and to see how far it may be justified. And I think it is helpful to begin by focusing on a rather different definition of the self from the one we just looked at. *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines the self as "The union of elements (as body, emotions, thoughts, sensations) that constitute the individuality and identity of a person." Like the previous set, this definition seems to assume a relatively robust conception of personal identity; and it assumes that the mental life of a person is a crucial element in that identity. But it does not presuppose that this identity is constituted *solely* by psychological as opposed to physical features; it does not posit anything like a permanent subject of states of consciousness; and it does not depend on any hard-and-fast distinction between essential and accidental features of a person. This conception of the self is certainly less clear-cut than the other one, but it is not open to the kinds of objections to which the other one was liable; to that extent, at least, it seems worth exploring. Let us call this kind of self the Webster-self, and the other kind the Oxford-self. I shall return to the Oxford-self at a couple of points later on; but from now on my main interest will be in the Webster-self. My question, then, will be what problems, if any, there may be in supposing the Greek skeptic to possess a self of *this* kind.

Let us try to spell out some implications of the Webster definition. A person's identity consists in a cluster of features. In order for there to be anything worth calling "the individuality and identity of a person," these features must presumably have some stability and duration. Indeed, where Webster says "emotions, thoughts, sensations," I would prefer to speak of *dispositions or tendencies to have* emotions, thoughts, and sensations of particular kinds. It is hard to see how individual, occurrent emotions, thoughts, or sensations could constitute someone's identity – unless we were to speak of someone's identity as consisting simply in his or her mental history (perhaps along with physical history). Obviously it is in some sense correct to say that what makes person A the person that she is is that she is the unique person who has had a certain specific (and very long) list of experiences. But the more interesting conception of a person's identity – and the one, I think, that is bound up with this notion of the self – is that of a certain set of *characteristics* that make

[1] Burnyeat 1983.

A the person that she is; and here, as I say, we are surely talking of characteristics that have some degree of stability. But nothing in the definition, as I am now understanding it, requires that these characteristics be unchangeable over time. Webster-selves cannot change overnight; but we need not have the same Webster-selves for our entire lifetimes, either. In fact, on this understanding of the term "self," it would be very surprising if we did.

What, more precisely, are the kinds of characteristics that make up this stable, yet not immutable construct that we are now calling the self? Without denying that bodily characteristics may belong on the list – for example, the fact that someone is tall and skinny or, more significantly, female or male – let us focus on what we would usually think of as the mental ones (though the distinction between physical and mental features is not absolutely clear-cut). And, before I leave the dictionary behind, let me draw attention to one other suggestive component of the Webster definition. The self, according to Webster, is a *union* of elements; it is a cluster of features that are not only relatively stable, but that are somehow *related* to one another in a coherent way. Indeed, it is plausible to think of the stability and the interrelatedness of the features as themselves connected.[2] Understood in this way, the self seems close to what we also call, in more everyday language, the personality; for this too is surely understood as a cluster of related and relatively long-term characteristics that make a person the unique and distinctive person that he or she is. Now, it seems clear that two central elements in any full-blown conception of the Webster-self, or the personality, are rationality and values. We have already spoken of thoughts and emotions, or the dispositions to have thoughts and emotions of particular kinds, as important parts of the complex cluster of features in question. That thoughts presuppose rationality is obvious; that emotions presuppose rationality is perhaps not obvious on its face, but has been argued so frequently and so cogently in recent decades that it too may be taken as a given. But emotions also presuppose values – and this has also been very widely recognized. To have emotions involves *caring* about things – wishing that things had happened differently, hoping that they will happen in a certain way, feeling that one has done something

[2] It is not clear that there is any *metaphysical* connection between interrelatedness and stability. But at least in the case of human dispositions and character traits, the interrelatedness of the features in question would seem to result in a mutual reinforcement among them, making the whole cluster resistant, though certainly not impervious, to change.

important and done it well, and so on. Sometimes the values involved are of the nature of personal preferences; one might care passionately about music, for example, and be profoundly disappointed at having to miss a certain concert, without necessarily feeling that music is valuable in some impersonal sense – though this is possible as well. But sometimes the values that are bound up with emotions clearly do aspire to some kind of impersonal or universal status, as in the case of guilt, remorse, or pride.

To have, or to be, a Webster-self is, then, among other things, to be a rational being, whose rationality is ordered or disposed in a particular way, and to have a particular collection of values, cares, and concerns; these various features form a recognizable unity and have a stability over time, though not so much so as to preclude gradual (or even, in exceptional cases, sudden) changes. Now, let us turn to Greek philosophy and particularly to the skeptics. Before tackling the skeptics, though, it is worth emphasizing that, although my discussion has taken off from dictionary definitions of a modern English word, the kinds of issues that I have been wrestling with so far are by no means alien to Greek philosophy in general. The importance of a continuing personal identity – and the oddity of views that deny or eliminate it – is clearly hinted at in, for example, Plato's *Theaetetus*. In the first major section of this dialogue Theaetetus proposes that knowledge is perception (151e), and Socrates immediately connects this with Protagoras' famous claim that "a human being is measure of all things" and with an idea, attributed to a variety of people, that everything is in constant change (151e–152e). Developing this set of ideas, Socrates lays out a theory of perception according to which every act of perception involves a different perceiver from every other; hence Socrates ill is a different person from Socrates well, and indeed Socrates perceiving something at time t is a different person from Socrates perceiving something at any time distinct from t (156a–160a). This aspect of the theory is not directly attacked, but we are clearly supposed to find something very peculiar about it. In a similar vein, when later introducing the final *reductio ad absurdum* of this thesis of constant change, Socrates has fun with the idea that the proponents of the theory themselves never remain the same (179e–180c).

As for the notion of a self constituted by a cluster of stable and interrelated features, something close to this seems to be taken for granted in Aristotle's ethics. First of all, *eudaimonia* is actually defined so as to be applicable only over the long term – not necessarily over an *entire* lifetime, although this is what it may sound like, and although such conceptions do exist elsewhere in Greek thought, but at least over a substantial period of a

person's life.[3] Second, the long list of virtues of character, all of them involving characteristic patterns of emotion, and all of them ideally connected with each other by means of their intimate connection with practical reason, seems to add up to a paradigm case of a Webster-self. One might say that Aristotle's goal is to depict, or to fashion, the best possible Webster-self; and, to the extent that people fail to achieve this exceptional unity through deficient virtue or deficient rationality, we can think of them as less successful Webster-selves.[4] At the same time, though, there is at least a hint of something more like an Oxford-self when Aristotle says, in Book X of the *NE*, that each person seems to *be* his *nous* (1178a2). And such conceptions are of course much more common in Plato; the immortality of the soul and the dispensability of the body, prominent in several dialogues, together clearly require that there be something that is non-bodily and that can be described as "That which in a person is really and intrinsically *he*" (or, for that matter, she – but of course, once the body is out of the picture, gender would seem to be out of the picture as well).

These are just prominent examples; others could be cited from other authors and periods in Greek philosophy. There is nothing anachronistic, then, in raising questions about the character of the skeptic's self (not that, even if this were anachronistic, the issue would be immediately deprived of interest). As I noted earlier, many people have felt that the life, or the person, of a skeptic is somehow defective – that the skeptic is somehow not in a position to live a full-blown human life. And, given what I have said so far, it looks as if one way to put these worries is to say that there is a question as to whether the skeptic, if he is to be consistent, has the resources with which to construct a complete or genuine Webster-self. How much is there to this charge? In the space available, I cannot hope to survey the entire history of Greek skepticism, within which there are arguably a number of significant differences. I shall focus

[3] *NE* 1098a16–18. It is not entirely clear what is meant by the phrase "in a complete life" (*en biôi teleiôi*) that occurs in this sentence. But unless Aristotle contradicts himself, it must mean something less than an entire lifetime; for he later allows that someone may lose, and perhaps later regain, *eudaimonia* over the course of a lifetime (1101a8–13).

[4] Should we think of the attainment of a Webster-self as a matter of degree – so that some people actually possess a Webster-self to a lesser degree than others (and some people perhaps not at all)? It depends on how far we press the normative implications of the notion of a "union of elements." If we think of a person's "union of elements" as simply the totality of the relevant elements, whatever they are, that constitute that person, then it is trivially true that everyone *has* a Webster-self (to the same degree) – though there may of course be differences in, say, how integrated or how well-rounded one person's self is compared with another's. But if, as I have been suggesting, we think of a union as a collection of elements that are in some way inherently interrelated, then it is no doubt true that some people may attain such a union to a greater degree than others.

mainly on the best-known Greek skeptic, Sextus Empiricus, closing with a few remarks about Pyrrho.

Sextus Empiricus says that the skeptic lives *adoxastôs*, "without beliefs." He is an expert at assembling opposing arguments and impressions on all kinds of topics and placing them together so that they have the feature of *isostheneia*, "equal strength"; as a result of this, he suspends judgment on all the topics in question, and this suspension of judgment in turn results in *ataraxia*, "freedom from disturbance." Now, there is a much debated question as to the precise extent of this withdrawal of belief; does it apply to all beliefs whatever, including everyday beliefs such as my belief that my checkbook is in my briefcase, or does it only apply to more general, theoretical beliefs about the nature of the world? In a well-known passage of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (1.13) Sextus addresses the issue of the senses in which the skeptic does and does not hold beliefs; but this is frustratingly unhelpful on the present issue. He says that the skeptic does not hold beliefs in the sense in which belief is "assent to some unclear object of investigation in the sciences" (tr. Annas/Barnes), and this may seem to suggest that it is only theoretical beliefs from which the skeptic withdraws. But he also says that the skeptic does hold beliefs in the loose sense of "acquiescing to some matter"; the example given is that he will not deny that he is hot or cold, when in fact he is hot or cold. The trouble is that this tells us nothing about beliefs such as my belief that my checkbook is in my briefcase, which are not theoretical beliefs, but not a mere registering of one's current experience either. Now, the extent of the skeptic's beliefs is clearly not unrelated to the question of what kind of self the skeptic can be understood to have. If the skeptic really has no beliefs at all beyond those that consist in a mere registering of current experience, then his mental life – and therefore, one might think, his self – would seem to be drastically restricted; if, on the other hand, he has all the kinds of beliefs most people have except for theoretical beliefs, then the prospects for a self of more or less normal proportions seem much better.

A proper treatment of the issue of the skeptic's beliefs would certainly require a chapter in itself, and I cannot directly pursue it any further. But I think that we can make some progress on our current topic by looking at the chapters of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* called "On the Skeptic's Criterion" and "What Is the Skeptic's Goal?" (1.21–30), which address some related issues in talking about the skeptic's way of life and the reasons for his tranquility. Acknowledging that there is a question as to how the skeptic can lead a recognizably human life, Sextus says that the skeptic does so by acting in light of the way things appear; whether things actually are as they

appear is another question, but the fact that they appear in certain ways is not up for discussion, and this is a good enough basis on which to shape a skeptical practice. He lists four major ways in which the skeptic habitually responds to appearances, which he calls "guidance of nature," "necessity of feelings," "handing down of laws and customs," and "teaching of skills." About "guidance of nature" he says simply that in virtue of it, "we are naturally capable of sensation and thought"; we have certain perceptual and cognitive capacities that lead us to react in certain ways to how things appear. Examples given of "necessity of feelings" are hunger and thirst, which lead us to eat and to drink. The "handing down of laws and customs" is what leads us to, for example, "accept piety as good and impiety as bad, in terms of ordinary life." And the "teaching of skills," obviously enough, is what enables us to master various kinds of expertise – such as medicine, which Sextus himself practiced, as did several other lesser-known skeptics.

Now, this seems to offer a much more promising set of resources for a skeptical self than appeared to be available on the more extreme interpretation of the skeptic's withdrawal from belief. "Necessity of feelings" is the exception here. For hunger and thirst, all by themselves, to lead us to eat and drink, nothing is required beyond a sequence of occurrent states; no additional cluster of stable and interrelated psychological characteristics seems to be needed – in this respect there need be no difference between a skeptic and many non-human animals. But the other three all seem to assume or refer to some set of stable psychological dispositions. And, in particular, it seems clear that included in this set of stable characteristics are the two elements that I suggested are particularly important in a self, rationality and values. As we saw, the thinking capacity is one of those natural endowments that, according to Sextus, shape our ways of reacting and behaving. And this should be no surprise. For it can hardly be denied that the skeptical practice of assembling opposing arguments – a practice in which Sextus relentlessly engages in much of his surviving work – is a highly developed exercise of rationality. The same can be said of the skeptic's response to the "equal strength" of these arguments, suspension of judgment. Admittedly, on most readings, the skeptic does not decide that suspension of judgment is *rationally required*; rather, suspension of judgment is simply an *effect* of being presented with this collection of arguments.[5] But it is an effect that depends on one's capacity to be

[5] This has been challenged especially by Perin 2006 and Perin 2010a. If Perin is right, then there is even less reason than I suggest to worry about the skeptic's rationality. But see note 10 below.

impressed with the arguments' "equal strength," and this already requires rationality. Equally, it is an effect that depends on a sense that these arguments are in fact opposed to one another, and that one cannot simply accept all of them; in other words, as has often been noticed,[6] the skeptic must in some sense adhere to one of the cornerstones of rationality, the Law of Non-Contradiction. As for values, Sextus makes clear in the passage we just looked at – and this is repeated elsewhere – that the skeptic in some sense accepts the values of the society in which he has been raised. This may be a depressingly conformist approach to values; but it is clear that the skeptic, as Sextus portrays him, does not *lack* values.

At this point, then, it is hard to see why there should be any barrier to a skeptic of Sextus' stamp possessing a Webster-self, just as everyone else does. The skeptic is a rational being, with a particular collection of values, cares, and concerns. Some of these, as just mentioned, will be a product of his society; some may be products of his engagement with skepticism itself; and some may be features of his individual personality. And so far, at least, it is not clear why these features, in the person of the skeptic, should not have the same kind of unity and stability over time that they have for other people.[7] The skeptic's personal identity does not seem to be at issue. So what more needs to be said about the skeptic's Webster-self? And why should there be felt to be a worry about the skeptic's personhood or humanity?

The answer is that there *is* more to be said; and part of the trouble is contained in the phrase "in some sense" that I twice made use of just now. For it is of course an important question *how* the skeptic can take on board all of the various characteristics and dispositions just referred to without at any point taking a stand on whether things actually are as they appear. In general terms the answer is not too hard to supply.[8] How, for example, does one train to be a doctor without acquiring a set of theories about the real workings of the human body? It can only be by treating medicine as simply a series of routines to be applied in appropriate circumstances, without any theories about the underlying causes of their success; if someone has a fever, one performs routines A, B, and C – they usually

[6] See, e.g., Nussbaum 1994, 307–8.

[7] If we think of the achievement of a Webster-self as a matter of degree (see note 4), then of course any given skeptic may very well have less of a Webster-self (i.e., a less integrated and unified personality) than some non-skeptics. But there is no obvious reason to think that skeptics as a group will have Webster-selves to a lesser degree than non-skeptics as a group.

[8] For a more detailed discussion of this question, with which I am in general agreement, see Barnes 1997, esp. 82–8.

seem to work, and never mind why. The medical theory of the time did indeed include such approaches; on this model learning medicine, or any other skill, is like learning to ride a bicycle – it is know-how without any accompanying propositional knowledge. And how does one "accept piety as good and impiety as bad" without accepting that certain things really are the case? Again, the answer must be that one conforms to the *practices* of someone who believes that piety really is good and impiety bad, without actually believing this oneself. This is the point of the qualification "in terms of ordinary life" (*biôtikôs*); one behaves in accordance with the values of one's society, but without fully adopting them, in the sense of making an intellectual or emotional commitment to their correctness.[9] Finally, the same must be true of the canons of rationality itself. The skeptic does indeed *proceed in accordance with* the Law of Non-Contradiction and other constitutive features of rationality. But it by no means follows that the skeptic would be prepared to defend these constitutive features as warranted, justified, or correct; indeed, in his logical works Sextus vigorously attacks the whole idea of deduction, induction, proof, as well as numerous other central aspects of both philosophical and ordinary reasoning, with a view to inducing suspension of judgment about their validity.[10] In adhering, then, to the canons of rationality, Sextus would say that he is simply following the inclinations with which his natural thinking capacity has endowed him, without any conviction (one way or the other) as to whether these canons are the *right* ones.

[9] It is a serious question whether this is indeed in tune with the attitudes of ordinary, non-philosophical people (as Sextus usually seems to intend in his references to the skeptic's affinity with "ordinary life" (e.g., *PH* 2.102)). For ordinary people presumably do believe that piety really is good and impiety bad; this is not just some theoretical obsession of philosophers. Certainly Sextus thinks that ordinary people hold that things are good and bad in the nature of things (*PH* 1.30, to which I return shortly), and it is hard to see why piety and impiety would be an exception. So to "accept piety as good and impiety as bad, in terms of ordinary life," cannot include adopting the same *attitude toward* piety and impiety as ordinary people do. And the only remaining alternative seems to be that the skeptic *does* what ordinary pious people do – including *saying* the kinds of things that one says at religious ceremonies – without having the beliefs that ordinarily go along with doing and saying those things. I have discussed this further in Bett 2009 and Bett 2015c; for a different view, see Annas 2011.

[10] This seems to create trouble for any reading such as Perin's (cf. note 5) which attributes to Sextus a robust commitment to rationality. Perin's article very persuasively follows out the implications of Sextus' claim to be a searcher for truth (a *skeptikos* in its etymological sense). However, there are other strands in this thinking that do not easily cohere with this, and that speak in favor of a commitment to rationality considerably more tenuous than this would seem to require. But even if we allow that Sextus' commitment to rationality goes deeper than I am suggesting, this does not, as far as I can see, affect what is really the centerpiece of my argument, namely, the tenuousness of his commitment to the *values* to which he adheres.

Now, it is this standoffish attitude – which applies, as we can now see, to both rationality and values – that is, I think, close to the heart of what has to many people seemed problematic about Sextus' brand of skepticism. And although, as I mentioned, Sextus several times insists that he is the supporter of ordinary ways of thinking as against the theoretical abstractions of non-skeptical philosophers (e.g., *PH* 2.102), on this central issue he goes conspicuously in the opposite direction. Immediately following the chapter on the skeptic's criterion is the chapter on the skeptic's *telos* or goal. This goal is said to be *ataraxia*, freedom from disturbance. Sextus is careful not to suggest that this is a *telos* in the sense intended by non-skeptical philosophers – that is, something that all humans *should* ultimately seek, or are *by nature* inclined to seek; instead, *ataraxia* is simply said to be what the skeptic as a matter of fact ultimately seeks.[11] Now, this *ataraxia* is said to be a by-product of the skeptic's suspension of judgment; though the skeptic originally hoped to achieve *ataraxia* through the discovery of the truth, he in fact achieves it only when his search for the truth leads him, instead, to abandon all claims concerning how things really are.

The reason for this is as follows. Someone who is not a skeptic does have beliefs about how things really are; and, in particular, he or she has multiple beliefs about what kinds of things are really, or by nature, good or bad. But someone who has beliefs of that sort is bound to be in a state of constant turmoil or obsession, desperate to get, or to hold on to, the good things and to get rid of, or to keep away, the bad things. The skeptic, by contrast, is free from all such "intense" pursuits and avoidances, as Sextus puts it; he simply does not care to anything like the same extent about

[11] Moller 2004 argued that the specification of a *telos* cannot be easily detached from the kind of philosophical theorizing the skeptics claimed to be getting away from. A similar point was pressed by an anonymous reviewer when this chapter was first being prepared for publication. But I remain unconvinced that the skeptic cannot simply say that *ataraxia* is what he wants and likes, with no further explanation or justification. It is what the skeptic chooses to aim for, but that is not the same as saying that the skeptic must regard it as in some objective sense choice*worthy*; nor does the word *telos* itself carry any such implication, even though most other philosophers who use the term do intend this. There may indeed be a causal story about why *ataraxia* is the skeptic's goal, and his earlier history as a non-skeptic seeking *ataraxia* on the grounds that it is really, or by nature, worth seeking, may indeed be part of this story. But this does not mean that the skeptic now has, or needs to have, grounds for this preference for *ataraxia* – or, for that matter, to feel embarrassment about the fact that he used to think he had grounds for it; it may, at this point, simply be a brute fact about him and his orientations. Of course, this means that anyone who does not share his brute preference has no reason to be interested in skepticism. But that fact itself is nothing with which the skeptic need be concerned – although Sextus does seem to think that, as it happens, a great many other people, especially philosophers, do share this preference, and the milieu of Hellenistic philosophy would no doubt encourage him to think this.

what does or does not happen to him. This is not to say that he is immune to external events. Sextus acknowledges, perhaps in response to incredulity about the truly inhuman level of tranquility attributed to Pyrrho, that the skeptic does suffer pain and other inevitable bodily woes. But even in these cases, he says, the skeptic is better off than the ordinary person. For the skeptic simply feels pain, hunger, or whatever it may be; the ordinary person feels pain, hunger, or whatever, and *also* has the opinion that this is a really bad condition to be in – with all the turmoil or obsession that this brings with it.[12] And in this case he is quite explicit that it is ordinary people (*idiôtai*, 1.30), and not just philosophers or theorists, who are subject to this higher level of affliction, owing to their beliefs about things being really good or bad, and the intensity of feeling that this carries with it. The skeptic has no commitments to anything's being really good or bad, and so nothing really matters to him to more than a minimal degree.

So where does this leave the self? Once again, it is not that the skeptic does not *have* a Webster-self. He is a rational being with a cluster of values, and there is no clear reason why this should not add up to the sort of "union of elements" that constitutes a Webster-self.[13] But his self is not, as we might put it, something in which he is *invested* in the same way as other people are invested in their selves. And this, in turn, is because the character of the skeptic's self is itself somewhat different from that of most other people. In most cases a person's Webster-self – an item that, as I suggested, is closely related to the personality – would seem to include, and to be shaped to a considerable extent by, what *really matters* to that person; "who you really are," as we often put it, is especially bound up with your core commitments. But if the skeptic has *no* core commitments – and this seems to be precisely the advantage that Sextus is claiming for the skeptic – then it is natural to think of the skeptic's self as much more lightweight, much less substantial than most other people's selves. It may not in fact be any more subject to change than other people's selves; it is not as if the skeptical outlook automatically renders one more susceptible to outside influences than are non-skeptics. So in one sense, at least, it need not lack stability. But the skeptic's self, because it lacks, by design, depth of commitment to anything in particular, is itself something to which the skeptic lacks depth of commitment. The skeptic may have a set of values, namely, those of the society in which he was raised, in the sense

[12] Indeed, elsewhere he even suggests that this additional opinion is *more* of an affliction than the pain, hunger, etc. itself; *PH* 3.236, *M* 11.158–60.

[13] See again note 7.

that he has a set of inclinations or preferences that shape his actions in a way that is in conformity with those values. However, as Myles Burnyeat has put it, "he does not *identify* with the values involved."[14]

It is worth trying to specify more precisely what this means. The notion of lack of identification might be taken to suggest a kind of duality or split in the skeptic's self: there is a body of attitudes making up what would normally be the Webster-self, and then there is *another* self – and a peculiarly contentless self, one might think – that holds this set of attitudes at arm's length. And if this is the case, then one might indeed question whether the skeptic had a genuine Webster-self at all; for the unity implied by the notion of a "union of elements" would seem to be spectacularly lacking.[15] But if this is what the charge of "lack of identification" amounts to, then the skeptic has good reason to resist it, and so should we. The self that, in this story, holds at arm's length the cluster of attitudes that would normally add up to the Webster-self could only be something like an Oxford-self, "a permanent subject of successive and varying states of consciousness"; and, as I suggested at the outset, both the skeptic and we ourselves have good reason to doubt the existence of any such thing. However, the non-identification does not have to be understood in this way. To say that the skeptic "does not identify with" the values that make up his Webster-self may simply mean that these values do not constitute core commitments. That is, the fact that he has these values, as opposed to the values of some other, quite different society, is a matter of indifference to him; as far as he is concerned, he might just as well have had the other set. This surely requires second-order attitudes as well first-order ones, but it does not require a second self, isolated from the values in question and passing judgment on them. We may say, on this picture, that the skeptic does not treat his values as crucial to "who he really is." But this is not to say that there is some additional entity that does constitute "who he really is," of which these values are not part; rather, it is just to say that he does not care deeply and fundamentally about them (or about anything else) – they are not aspects of himself that he just could not contemplate doing without. And in the same way, he does not identify with, although he does adhere to, the canons of rationality.

[14] Burnyeat 1983, 132 (emphasis added).

[15] See again note 4; one might conceive this either as the lack of a Webster-self altogether or as the possession of an unusually ill-integrated Webster-self. My choice of the term "genuine Webster-self" in the main text implies a preference for the former; this kind of hypothetical scenario does seem to suggest that a self worthy of the name has to be at least somewhat integrated.

So on this second, less objectionable scenario, there is not, to repeat, a worry about the very existence of the skeptic's Webster-self. The concern is rather about its character or quality. If you do not treat certain values as core commitments, not to be abandoned without major struggle and turmoil, then there is something peculiarly thin, and also peculiarly unanchored, about your Webster-self. If your values are such that you do not care deeply about anything, then you will also not care deeply about *having* the specific set of values, etc. – or in other words, the Webster-self – that you in fact have. Or better: you will not care deeply about *being* the specific set of values, etc. – or in other words, the Webster-self – that you in fact *are*; for again, unless we are to reintroduce problematic notions like the Oxford-self, there is no further entity that is "the real you" beyond this cluster of (first- and second-order) attitudes itself. And this lack of investment (as I put it earlier), both in the values themselves and in the self of which those values are an important part, is bound to strike many of us as unappealing.

Are we being too hard on the skeptic? Is there perhaps something of which the skeptic *would* be willing to say, "Yes: this is a core commitment of mine"? One might think that this would have to be true of the skeptical attitude, or the skeptical procedure, itself. But here again we have to be careful. For the skeptic, if *he* is being careful, is not going to make any strong claims about being *committed* even to the skeptical attitude or procedure. Sextus' most succinct and pithy description of skepticism comes in a well-known sentence near the beginning of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*: "Skepticism is an ability to place in opposition appearances and things thought in any way whatever, from which, because of the equal strength in the objects and words that stand in opposition, we come first to suspension of judgment, and after this to freedom from disturbance" (1.8). This is a purely factual description of what the skeptic does – just as, to repeat, Sextus' mention of *ataraxia* as the skeptic's goal is couched purely in terms of what the skeptic in fact aims for. But to describe how the skeptic actually proceeds is not necessarily to express any intellectual or ethical commitment to that procedure. And in fact, Sextus occasionally takes the trouble to make clear that he has no such commitment. In speaking of the goal, he says that the skeptic's goal is *ataraxia* "up to now" (*achri nun*, *PH* 1.25), and "up to now" and related phrases are a recurring feature of Sextus' writing. The point is that there is no reason to assume that the situation will remain the same. As he makes clear from the outset, the skeptic simply reports how things seem to him at the time. "Up to now" the skeptics have found themselves inclined to seek *ataraxia*; and "up to

now" they have found that a successful route to this is suspension of judgment. But they have no intention of clinging to this goal and this method at all costs. If at some point they found themselves more inclined to seek something other than *ataraxia*, then that is what they would seek; or if (supposing *ataraxia* was still their goal) they found that some other method – Prozac, for example – was more effective in delivering *ataraxia* than the skeptical method, they would switch to that. These changes of allegiance would come about without any soul-searching or angst; they would be purely a result of how things struck the skeptic at different times. And so, if one were to ask Sextus, "Is the skeptical attitude or method itself a core commitment of yours?" his response would have to be, "Certainly not; there is no set of attitudes or activities that constitutes a 'core commitment' for me. Skepticism and its result, *ataraxia*, are just what I find myself attracted to right now." But to say this seems to be tantamount to saying that the skeptic regards his Webster-self as dispensable in its current form; and that, in turn, bespeaks a Webster-self, and an attitude toward the Webster-self (and these two are, as I hope has become clear, closely connected) that most people would regard as profoundly disorienting. Again, the changes just mentioned might very well not actually occur. What is important is the skeptic's attitude toward their possibility.

It is, of course, another question whether Sextus actually lives up to (some might say, "down to") what his outlook seems officially to commit him to. For, as has often been noticed, this terminally open-minded attitude seems to be belied by the elaborate edifices of argumentation that Sextus and his predecessors have erected in the service of skepticism itself. Sextus is as much an *active* reasoner as any of his non-skeptical opponents.[16] He argues tirelessly against the Stoics, the Epicureans, and others, with a view to bringing about the desired situation of "equal strength" among the various positions on offer on any given topic; anyone who has read through the entirety of, for example, the two long books that comprise *Against the Logicians* is hardly left with the impression of someone not committed to what he is doing. Again, the various sets of skeptical Modes, which Sextus sketches in Book I of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, are prearranged means by which the skeptic is to achieve, but then also to maintain, the attitude of suspension of judgment; to devise and employ these Modes would seem to be a mark of someone who cares about keeping the skeptical outlook intact in himself, even when it shows signs

[16] I thank Oliver Thorndike for impressing this point on me.

of waning. It may be, then, that Sextus does have more in the way of commitments than he would, or in consistency should, admit; perhaps he does, in Burnyeat's phrase, "identify with the values involved" in skepticism itself to a greater degree than his official position would allow. And if this is the case, then perhaps his self is not as thin, and his attitude toward it not as insouciant, as appeared to be the case just now.

If we stick with the official story, though, the verdict seems to be as follows. It is certainly the case, as we saw earlier, that the skeptic does have values and does exhibit rationality; and this may give us reason to believe that there is indeed a cluster of psychological elements, which may very well be both unified and of considerable duration, that could be said to "constitute the individuality and identity" of any given skeptic. However, this seems to give the skeptic a Webster-self of only a rather etiolated kind. For these elements – again, if the skeptic is being fully consistent – must all ultimately be regarded as contingent and dispensable. What is lacking is any anchoring of these elements around a set of core commitments – "core" not in the sense of being absolutely unchangeable, but in the sense of what might over some extended period of a person's life be claimed, either by that very person or by others, to matter fundamentally to that person. There is, of course, no reason why the skeptic should regard this as an objection. "I am not interested in core commitments," he might say; "those are just what lead to the 'intense' attitudes I am trying to get away from. Tranquility is what I am after, and if a robust self with depth of commitment is an obstacle to that, so much the worse for the robust self." However, to repeat, there is a widespread sense among non-skeptics that the skeptic's existence is *missing* something important; and what it is missing, as we can now see, is a Webster-self of the robust character I have tried to describe. It may be that such a pared-down self is not even possible; as I just observed, Sextus seems in practice to display more significant commitments than he officially admits. But regardless of that, the skeptic's life is frequently felt, at least by us today, to be a thoroughly unattractive one; and the thinness of the skeptic's self is, I suggest, a major part of the reason for this. And, although it may be tempting to connect our leanings toward a more robust self with Romantic notions of authenticity, I suspect that the sense of unattractiveness was no less common, and not so different in kind, in the ancient world. The objection regularly raised against skeptics was that a skeptical life was humanly impossible. But whether or not people found these charges convincing – for the skeptics had plenty to say in response to them – it looks as if they generally saw the skeptical life as undesirable, at least for any normal human being;

certainly skepticism never achieved anything like the popularity enjoyed by either Stoicism or Epicureanism.

It is interesting, in this connection, that being a normal human being is precisely what Pyrrho, the supposed original skeptic, appears to have adopted a conscious policy of avoiding.[17] We are told by two different sources that Pyrrho proposed as an ideal "stripping off the human being" (*ekdunai ton anthrôpon*).[18] In both sources this remark follows an anecdote about Pyrrho being scared by a dog, and departing from his usually tranquil demeanor; in explaining himself, Pyrrho says that "stripping off the human being" is difficult. One of these sources then has Pyrrho elaborate by saying that nevertheless "one should struggle against things as much as possible in one's deeds, and if not that, in one's words" (DL 9.66); presumably what this means is that one should struggle against the normal, engaged human reactions to things. One might say that being scared by a dog is more an instinctive reaction than any indication of the kinds of cares and concerns that, as I have been arguing, give robustness to a Webster-self. However, the general picture of Pyrrho's lifestyle and attitude that emerges from the entire series of anecdotes about him (in Diogenes Laertius and elsewhere) is of someone who really has shed all such cares and concerns to an extraordinary degree; it is not implausible, therefore, to see the ideal of "stripping off the human" as including deliberately ridding oneself of the kind of robust self that, as we have seen, the skeptic of Sextus' model also seems to lack. Sextus' skeptic seems to differ from Pyrrho in his adherence to convention; he follows prevailing laws and customs, whereas Pyrrho seems to have been radically unconventional. But both of these stances are an expression of a similar kind of withdrawal from any of what I have been calling "core commitments."

This point is reinforced by another anecdote. The terrifying dog is not the only animal to find its way into the sources about Pyrrho; pigs also appear several times. Pyrrho washes a pig and takes a pig to market (DL 9.66), thereby illustrating his indifference to conventional ideas about the activities appropriate to different social classes. But the pig I am particularly interested in is the one that was on board with Pyrrho on a ship in a storm. According to this anecdote, all the other passengers were frightened. But on this occasion Pyrrho did keep his calm, and pointed to a pig who continued eating its food as if nothing was wrong. This is the state of *ataraxia*, Pyrrho remarked, that the wise person should maintain; in an

[17] In these remarks on Pyrrho I am heavily indebted to Warren 2002, chapter 4.
[18] DL 9.66, Aristocles in Eusebius, *Praep. evang.* 14.18.26.

exact reversal of Mill's remark about a human being dissatisfied versus a pig satisfied,[19] the untroubled pig is a model for us all to emulate. "Stripping off the human," then, is in certain respects a striving for the *sub*-human, as we would normally call it.[20] But of course, Pyrrho would object to the prefix "sub-." His whole point is that there is nothing *inferior* about the condition he is recommending, including its dismantling of the robust self – on the contrary, this is the most desirable state to be in.

Consistent with Pyrrho's recommendation of "stripping off the human," but pointing in the opposite direction, is the description of Pyrrho, by his disciple Timon of Phlius, as *god*-like in his tranquility – specifically, as like the sun god whose circular journey is absolutely regular and imperturbable.[21] But of course gods – or at least, gods as Greek philosophers tend to portray them (Homer is another matter) – do not have robust Webster-selves either. That is, gods do not have a cluster of cares, concerns, and core commitments that make them unique and distinctive. Rather, the Greek philosophers' gods are entirely trouble-free; they are also, relatedly, entirely unaffected by anything that happens in the world – even when they exert themselves on the world's behalf, as not all of them do. There may be occasional exceptions to this picture; but it seems to me to cover all the conceptions of god offered by the major Greek philosophers, starting with Xenophanes and stretching through Plato and Aristotle to the Stoics and Epicureans and then to the neo-Platonists. If such gods have selves of any kind, it is surely Oxford-selves; whatever may be the case with humans, the notion of a permanent subject of consciousness that constitutes the essence of someone seems quite appropriate to these divine beings. It is no accident that in the same context in which Aristotle speaks of *nous* as what each person really is – which is also reminiscent, as we observed, of the Oxford-self – he also speaks of the importance of striving to be as divine as possible; and similar points might be made about the *homoiôsis theôi*, "likeness to god," that appears as an ideal in many other Greek philosophers. Timon's praise of Pyrrho as god-like is clearly appealing to this way of conceiving of the divine. In doing so,

[19] Mill 1987, 281.

[20] Pyrrho is also reported to have admired Homer because of his comparisons of humans with wasps, flies, and birds, as well as leaves (DL 9.67; cf. 9.71, where Homer is listed as a proto-skeptic). But here the emphasis seems to be on the frailty and vanity of human beings; there is no clear sign of a recommendation on Pyrrho's part to emulate these other species.

[21] A seven-line fragment of Timon's *Indalmoi* can be assembled from overlapping quotations: DL 9.65 (which includes the information about the source), Sextus *M* 11.1, and Sextus *M* 1.305 (which includes the specific lines referred to in the main text). The complete fragment appears as text 2D in LS and as text 61 in Decleva Caizzi 1981.

then, he is perhaps hinting at a form of Oxford-self as a goal to be strived for (though not, of course, as what we all are anyway). But at any rate, this picture of Pyrrho is just as much a rejection of the robust Webster-self as is the image of the pig or the advice to "strip off the human."

Neither Sextus nor any other Greek skeptic follows Timon in his suggestion of the skeptic's existence as divine; nor, therefore, is there any hint in their ideas of an Oxford-self as what the skeptic should aspire to. But leaving that aside, Sextus and Pyrrho seem, on this issue, to be very much on the same wavelength. A number of scholars, including myself, have argued for interpretations of Pyrrho's thought that create a significant philosophical distance, as well as a historical distance, between Pyrrho and Sextus.[22] But as regards their striving for a condition in which a key aspect of what makes up the Webster-self of any full-blooded human being is discarded, there seems to be little or no difference between them.[23]

[22] See Bett 2000a; also, e.g., Decleva Caizzi 1981 and LS, section 1.

[23] This chapter was originally written for a conference on the self in Helsinki in 2003; I also presented a version of it at Philosophy in Assos (Turkey) in July 2004. I thank the audience at both conferences for their helpful comments; the chapter benefited especially from remarks by Richard Sorabji, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Gisela Striker, Julia Annas, Charlotte Witt, Sara Conley, Lucas Thorpe, and Roberto Polito. I also thank an anonymous reviewer (for the volume on the self in which the chapter was first published) for comments that prompted a number of further improvements. Finally, I dedicate this version of the chapter to the memory of my friend Juha Sihvola, who invited me to the Helsinki conference and co-edited the volume to which it led, and whose untimely death was a loss not only to those who knew him well but to the entire philosophical community in Finland and elsewhere.

CHAPTER 8

How Ethical Can an Ancient Skeptic Be?

It is a commonplace that ancient skepticism differs from skepticism as discussed in contemporary philosophy – or at any rate, in contemporary epistemology – in being practical;[1] skepticism is supposed be an outlook that one incorporates into one's life, as opposed to simply discussing in the seminar room. In the Pyrrhonist tradition this is taken one step further: not only is it assumed that one will live in accordance with skepticism, but the skeptic's life is said to have special and unique advantages. Sextus Empiricus, in particular, emphasizes the ways in which the skeptic is (as we might put it) better off than other people; however, it seems clear that this was always an important feature of the Pyrrhonist position.[2] Now, the very possibility of a skeptical *life* has been questioned since ancient times; the so-called *apraxia* or "inactivity" objection, which came in several different forms,[3] maintained that skepticism and action – at least, action of any full-blooded human kind – are simply incompatible. Modern philosophers have also found versions of this objection persuasive; Hume is an obvious example, despite the power that he takes skeptical reasoning to have. And a new version was constructed in our own day in a now classic paper by Myles Burnyeat, "Can the Skeptic Live His Skepticism?" (Burnyeat 1983). Other scholars have come to the skeptics' rescue;[4] but it is clear that this is a major point of contention in the study of the ancient skeptical outlook.

[1] I enter the caveat because one might at least expect that skepticism about ethics would be acknowledged to have practical ramifications. And it is possible to find suggestions along these lines; see, for example, Lear 1983, where the position Lear calls relativism can also be seen as a form of skepticism. For the most part, however, moral skepticism today is not taken to have any more in the way of practical implications than is epistemological skepticism. I have said a little more about this in Bett 2013a.

[2] Both Pyrrho, the starting point of the movement, and Aenesidemus, the founder of the later Pyrrhonist tradition to which Sextus belonged, emphasize the skeptic's happiness and contrast it with the torments experienced by other people. For Pyrrho, see Aristocles in Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 14.18.1–5; for Aenesidemus, see Photius, *Bibliotheca* 169b19–26.

[3] For a good account of the various different types of *apraxia* objection, see Vogt 2010.

[4] See, e.g., Morrison 1990; Vogt 1998; Ribeiro 2002.

My concern, however, is with an aspect of the other claim – confined, as I say, to the Pyrrhonist tradition of skepticism – namely, that the skeptic is better off than other people. Supposing we grant that the skeptical life, as the Pyrrhonist depicts it, is indeed possible, is it a life that we could reasonably welcome or aspire to? More specifically, I have in mind the question of what kind of *values* the skeptical life can include and what kind of adherence to these values it can permit. Does the skeptic – and again, from now on by "skeptic" I mean "Pyrrhonist skeptic" – have the resources with which to live a life that the rest of us would consider ethically robust? I shall argue that there is room for considerable doubt about this. And, to the extent that this is so, many of us will find it difficult to accept that this life is as desirable as the skeptic tries to make it sound. Tackling these issues requires us to be clear about a number of points concerning the nature of the Pyrrhonist outlook – particularly, but not only, in ethics – and this is where I begin. For the rest of the chapter, I focus on Pyrrhonism as represented by Sextus Empiricus, who stands near the end of the tradition and is the only Pyrrhonist of whom complete works survive.

Sextus describes skepticism as an ability to produce oppositions, among arguments or impressions on the same topic, in such a way as to produce suspension of judgment because of the "equal strength" (*isostheneia*) of the items opposed to one another (*PH* 1.8). Faced with these opposing arguments and impressions, one cannot muster any inclination to accept any one of them in preference to the others; hence one has no choice but to withhold one's acceptance from all of them. This is not to say that one thinks any or all of them are false or misleading; one does not think anything definite about them at all – one simply refrains from having any view, one way or the other, about their correctness. Nor is this because one thinks suspension of judgment is the *rationally required* response to the situation. For that would itself amount to the holding of a definite view on the meta-level, about the nature of rational justification; but the topics on which the skeptic aims to produce suspension of judgment are quite unrestricted, and so would include second-order logical or epistemological topics like this. Rather, one's suspension of judgment must be understood as the inevitable psychological reaction to being faced with oppositions that the skeptic has set up so as to be of "equal strength." That we – that is, both the skeptics themselves and others confronted with their approach – experience this reaction in these circumstances is no doubt due to deep-seated features of our psychological makeup. Sextus does not deny this; one of his central explanations for our thinking and acting as we do is our natural perceptual and cognitive capacities (*PH* 1.23–4). He does not,

however, attempt to theorize about these capacities, which would again be inconsistent with a skeptical outlook. If pressed to explain why we suspend judgment when placed in the position engineered by the skeptic – as opposed, say, to accepting both poles of a contradiction[5] – his answer would simply be "that's the way we are." That there are characteristics with which we are born, and others inculcated through our experience, that shape the way we behave is a theme we will return to later. The important point to note for now is the intellectual passivity (as Sextus himself depicts the situation) of even the central move in the adoption of skepticism itself, the move to suspension of judgment.

In the area of ethics, Sextus' discussion mainly revolves around one central topic: is anything in reality – or, as he often puts it, "by nature" (*phusei*) – good or bad?[6] He deals with this topic in two works: in the third book of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (*PH*), and in *Against the Ethicists* (*M* 11), which is the final book of his partially surviving longer work. In *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* the result of the discussion is what one would expect from the general picture I have just sketched: Sextus says that we have no option but to suspend judgment as to whether anything is really good or bad (*PH* 3.182, 235). Some philosophers argue that there are really good and bad things (and they differ further among themselves, of course, as to what these are), while others argue that there are no such things; and we are in no position to choose between these options. In *Against the Ethicists*, on the other hand, although Sextus again speaks of the skeptic's suspending judgment (*M* 11.111) – and this suspension clearly has to do with the topic of things being good or bad by nature – it looks as if the outcome of the discussion is rather that *nothing* is by nature good or bad. There are complicated questions here about the development of Pyrrhonism and the development of Sextus' own outlook;[7] it may be that the picture sketched above – which is based on the only explicit treatment of the general principles of skepticism in Sextus' surviving work, and seems to conform

[5] As Aristotle says his opponents, on the issue of the primacy and inescapability of the Law of Non-Contradiction, claim to do. Note how Aristotle attributes to these people both the belief that propositions of the form "P and not-P" can be true and the belief *that it is possible to hold* beliefs of this kind (*Met.* 1005b35–1006a2); a major part of his response consists of attacking the former by means of attacking the latter. For Aristotle, as for the skeptics and their opponents (see earlier), the possibility of incorporating a philosophical outlook into one's ordinary attitudes is important, as it typically is not for philosophers today. I have discussed this in Bett 1993.

[6] Or indifferent – that is, neither good nor bad. But Sextus does not consistently include the indifferent alongside the good and the bad in these discussions; and in any case, no issue of principle is affected by its presence or absence.

[7] I have discussed this in Bett 1997, introduction and commentary, and in Bett 2000a, chapter 4. For other points of view, see, e.g., Schofield 2007; Hankinson 2010.

to his actual practice most of the time – represents just one version or phase of the Pyrrhonist outlook, not the only one. But we need not worry about these questions here. For what the two works have in common is the idea that the skeptic refrains from positing anything that *is* good or bad by nature; and, as we shall see, it is this that is crucial for understanding the Pyrrhonist's own practical attitudes.

I said that the skeptic's suspension of judgment is unrestricted as to subject matter. But this needs to be qualified. What Sextus says is that the skeptic suspends judgment about how things are, but does not question the fact that things *appear* to us in certain ways (*PH* 1.19–20). Honey appears to us sweet (most of the time, anyway), and that it appears so is not up for discussion; what is subject to debate, and what the skeptic will eventually suspend judgment about, is whether it actually is sweet. And, with this proviso – that we are dealing with how things are, not with how they appear – the claim that skeptical suspension of judgment is unrestricted can stand. Now, there is a difficult question about how we are to understand this division; what exactly is supposed to fall on the side of "how things are," and what on the other side? Sextus is clear that theoretical questions of the kind investigated by the sciences are questions about which the skeptic does suspend judgment (*PH* 1.13). And it is possible to understand the honey example as falling under this heading; perhaps what Sextus suspends judgment about are questions such as honey's underlying molecular structure. But a great many everyday beliefs are not like this. Take my belief that I am now on the twelfth floor of an apartment building that is currently serving as the temporary headquarters for the humanities departments at Johns Hopkins, while their regular building is undergoing major renovations – as I can see from its scaffolding-covered exterior, which features prominently in the spectacular view that is my temporary office's one advantage over my normal workspace. Sextus gives no explicit answer as to how to classify a belief, or set of beliefs, such as this. It is, in any normal sense, about how things are, not how they appear; yet its subject or subjects are clearly not theoretical or scientific in character. Scholars have debated this point of interpretation without any clear resolution, and it may be that Sextus' text offers no single, clear, and consistent answer on the question.

On the topic that interests us here, however, it is reasonably clear what Sextus means the skeptic to avoid. For he is quite explicit (*PH* 1.30) that the belief that there are things that are good, and things that are bad, by nature – the central ethical belief that the skeptic refrains from – is one that is held by ordinary people, not just by philosophers debating meta-ethical

questions. Presumably what he has in mind, then, is not anything metaphysically subtle, but simply the common-sense thought that certain things are good and that others are bad. Now, by adding "really" or "by nature," Sextus indicates that he takes ordinary ethical thinking to include a commitment to some form of ethical objectivity. We may take issue with this assumption – or we may think it is no longer true today, whatever was the case in antiquity – but it is far from being absurd; essentially the same view was advanced in 1977 by J. L. Mackie, and has remained an important focus of interest in contemporary meta-ethics.[8] But there is no reason to think that Sextus (any more than Mackie) means to attribute to ordinary people any particular or determinate view of the nature or basis of this objectivity; that is the province of theorists. And Sextus' point here is that the skeptic will have nothing to do with either theoretically rarefied or common-sense versions of the belief that there are things that are really good or bad. This will be of some significance when we try to situate the skeptic's practical attitudes in relation to those of ordinary, ethically engaged agents.

Why is the skeptic supposed to be better off than other people? Sextus tells us (*PH* 1.8) that skeptical suspension of judgment has a further result, namely, *ataraxia*, or freedom from worry. He also says (1.12) that the starting point of skepticism is the hope of *ataraxia*, to be attained (it is initially thought) by discovering the truth; one is bothered (*tarassomenoi*) by the divergence (*anômalia*) among arguments and impressions on the same topics, and one hopes to be freed from this worry by settling which of these arguments and impressions are true. But this, of course, is not what happens; rather, one comes to suspension of judgment instead, and it is *this*, not the discovery of the truth, that yields *ataraxia*. The point is made more explicit a little later in the simile of Apelles the painter (1.28–9). Like a painter who throws his sponge in exasperation at a canvas on which he has been trying unsuccessfully to depict the foam around a horse's mouth – and finds that the imprint of the sponge gives him just the effect he was aiming for – the skeptic achieves his aim, *ataraxia*, by giving up on the search for truth that he had originally (before becoming a skeptic) thought would lead to it. According to this story, then, it appears that the initial disturbance comes from the inability to decide among conflicting appearances or theories. The subject matter of these appearances or theories

[8] Mackie 1977. Reactions to this work included an important volume of essays, Honderich 1985; an indication of the continued interest it excited is another volume of essays, Joyce and Kirchin 2010.

would seem to be irrelevant; suspension of judgment on any topic contributes to *ataraxia*, because it frees one from the anxiety associated with not being able to choose between the alternatives. Moreover, it is consistent with everything Sextus says here that, had the original hope of discovering the truth been fulfilled, that too would have yielded *ataraxia*. There is no suggestion that the pre-skeptic was mistaken in thinking that discovery, were it to have been achieved, would have produced the result he was hoping for; the problem is rather that the attempt at discovery keeps on producing suspension of judgment instead (which turns out, in the end, not to be a problem after all).

However, this is not Sextus' only account of the matter. In several places he addresses more directly the question of why *ataraxia* results from suspension of judgment. And here a rather different picture emerges. It is not suspension of judgment in general that is now said to be responsible for *ataraxia*, but suspension of judgment specifically about things that are good or bad by nature. The central idea is that the person who does believe that certain things are good or bad by nature is thrown into an intense turmoil concerning these things. If one thinks that certain things are really in their nature good, one will be desperate to get or to keep them; if one thinks that other things are really in their nature bad, one will be desperate to avoid or get rid of them. In both *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (1.25–30, 3.235–8) and, at much greater length, in *Against the Ethicists* (110–67), Sextus emphasizes the frenzy that surrounds the holding of such beliefs, and the great advantage that accrues to the skeptic from being free from all of them. (Again, that the skeptic holds no beliefs of the form "X is good/bad by nature" is common to both works, even if they differ in the way suggested above.) Here, then, the point is that the stakes are simply very much lower for the skeptic in a great many areas of life; whereas for the non-skeptic there are numerous things that matter very deeply, for the skeptic nothing matters especially. Sextus does acknowledge that the skeptic experiences hunger, pain, and other bodily afflictions. But even here, he suggests, the skeptic is in a better position than the non-skeptic; for although everyone feels pain in certain circumstances, the non-skeptic experiences the additional anguish stemming from the belief that pain is by nature a bad thing. There is an interesting point of contact here between skepticism and Stoicism. For the stability and calm of the Stoic sage's demeanor, as contrasted with the turmoil and instability of ordinary people, is also due to the sage's being free from large classes of unwarranted beliefs to the effect that certain things are really good or bad, beliefs that the Stoics designate as passions (*pathê*). The difference, of

course, is that in the Stoic picture, the sage instead has *correct* beliefs about what is really good and bad, whereas the skeptic simply lacks such beliefs altogether.

Sextus' claim that beliefs to the effect that things are really good or bad are a source of trouble seems more convincing in some cases than in others. A star athlete who sets great value on athletic achievement might be hugely disappointed at not breaking the record in some race. And if she did break the record, she might be constantly worried that someone else might improve on her performance and snatch the record away from her.[9] Another athlete might not think such achievements were of any real importance in the scheme of things, and would be much less concerned about the results of any competition, whether they went in her favor or against her. (Of course, the second athlete would be much less likely to become a star. But the point about comparative levels of worry still stands.) But that this kind of pattern obtains in life in general, or among people in general, seems highly implausible. For it is equally true that those with firm beliefs about the moral order of things are often calmer than those whose minds on such matters are not made up. If you are firmly convinced that abortion is simply wrong (perhaps with certain exceptions), or if you are firmly convinced that early-stage abortion poses no moral problems at all, then you are likely to be much more secure and comfortable in your decision, in the first case, not to have an abortion (assuming none of those exceptions applies), or, in the second case, to have an early-stage abortion, than you would be whatever your decision was, if this was an issue about which you were seriously conflicted. Now, it might be replied that the latter situation is not that of the Pyrrhonist, who, as Sextus describes him, is not in the grip of conflicting or uncertain beliefs about ethical matters, but simply lacks such beliefs altogether. This is correct as far as it goes, but it does not close the issue. For, first, the idea that anyone could be so devoid of the relevant beliefs as to be unperturbed by, or oblivious to, the moral dimensions of *every* situation is difficult to swallow; I return to this point later, in the context of an example of Sextus' own. And second, part of the point of my example here is that definite moral beliefs are often not merely not a source of torment, but a positive source of comfort in difficult

[9] Another point that Sextus makes in this context is that those who achieve what they take to be good "are irrationally and immeasurably excited" (*PH* 1.27, cf. *M* 11.116, 146), and that this too is something the skeptic is better off without. To us this may have a strange ring; but again, it is in line with Stoic opposition to the passions, this time on grounds of their excessiveness.

situations; and from comfort of this kind *both* the conflicted, but ethically engaged agent *and* the person who lacks all beliefs to the effect that things are in reality good or bad would be equally excluded.

What is also problematic, as we have seen, is that Sextus seems to give us two different accounts of why suspension of judgment produces *ataraxia*. It is not easy to see how these two pictures are to be combined. In one case *ataraxia* is supposed to be achieved by suspension of judgment on all subjects, but in the other it is beliefs about good and bad that are the sole focus of attention. Moreover, in the latter account the notion of an initial attempt to discover the truth, or an inability to decide among alternatives, seems to play no role at all. For all that Sextus says in the present context, the beliefs about good and bad from which the skeptic is free might even be correct, and their holders might even know that they are correct. Sextus never suggests that this would make any difference to their capacity to drive one to a state of intense anxiety; for it is their content that is the problem, not their truth value or degree of justification. It is particularly puzzling that in one place, his chapter on the skeptic's *telos*, or aim in life (*PH* 1.25–30), Sextus appears to present both accounts together, as if there was no difference between the two. One can see how beliefs about good and bad might be connected with broader beliefs about the nature of the world. But on this last issue, the two accounts actually seem to be incompatible with one another.

On both accounts, though, we can hold on to the central point discussed earlier: the skeptic will be free from any beliefs to effect that anything is in reality, or by nature, good or bad. And this takes us to the topic that is my main concern: to what extent can the skeptic be an ethically engaged agent? In answering the broader question of how the skeptic acts and makes decisions of any kind, Sextus says (*PH* 1.21–4) that he follows the appearances, and then distinguishes four broad categories of "appearances" that shape the skeptic's life. These divide into what we can call, roughly, "natural" and "cultural" appearances. First (to return to something that came up earlier), we perceive things in certain ways and think in certain ways, and this is simply part of our nature. Second, we have certain natural drives that prompt us to action: hunger prompts us to eat, thirst to drink, and so on. Third – and now we move to the cultural side – we are raised in societies that have certain laws and customs, and that exert pressure on everyone to conform to those laws and customs; as a result, we become habituated in the patterns of behavior that they dictate. Fourth, we are trained in certain kinds of expertise, and this too shapes our behavior in myriad ways.

A number of questions may be raised about how we are to understand the skeptic's actions and decisions, as here described. Clearly the point of this list is to characterize in more detail what it is to "follow the appearances," as opposed to taking any stand on how things really are; yet, as we saw, it is controversial where precisely the boundary between these two is to be drawn. For our purposes, however, this is again less of a problem than it might appear. The most important for us of these four categories is clearly the third, laws and customs. Now, we have seen that the skeptic holds no belief to the effect that anything is good or bad by nature; we have also seen that Sextus takes ordinary people, and not just philosophers, to suffer from such beliefs. The skeptic's adherence to his society's laws and customs, then, must be one that involves no commitment to anything being really good or bad. As an example of this kind of adherence, he says that skeptics "accept piety as good and impiety as bad, in terms of ordinary life" (*PH* 1.24). But this "acceptance" cannot involve endorsement of the propositions "piety is good" and "impiety is bad"; those would be examples of the objectionable beliefs that he takes both theorists and ordinary people to hold.[10] Rather, it must consist simply in *doing* the kinds of things that his society dictates concerning religious observances.[11] Other people do the same kinds of things, and if pressed to justify their behavior, would do so by way of such propositions. But the skeptic, not being in the business of justification at all, would simply say that he acts this way because his society raised him to do so – where the "because" is purely causal.[12]

In *Against the Ethicists* (164–6) Sextus gives another example of what appears to be the same kind of thing. What if a tyrant ordered you to do something appalling, or something appalling will happen to you? The example is initially presented as an objection to skepticism. The objector

[10] Unless we suppose a distinction between "piety is really good," which he takes both ordinary people and theorists to accept, and some weaker sense of "piety is good" that involves no commitment to ethical objectivity. But Sextus shows no sign of recognizing any such distinction.

[11] This must be the force of *biôtikôs*, translated "in terms of ordinary life." But in light of the previous point about the ethical beliefs of ordinary people, "in terms of ordinary life" cannot be understood to capture everything worth noting about ordinary people's attitudes. Perhaps the thought is that in the everyday business of life, ordinary people will simply act, as does the skeptic, but that when it comes to matters of good and bad (unlike many other matters that are solely the provinces of theorists), ordinary people *also* have a reflective side, and that it is here that their beliefs about what is really good and bad emerge.

[12] There are complicated questions about the skeptic's attitude toward religion, as portrayed by Sextus. I have discussed this in Bett 2015c; for a partially opposed perspective on the same topic, see Annas 2011. But these do not, I think, affect how we are to understand the nature of his "acceptance" of the goodness of piety and the badness of impiety; this "acceptance" must consist in something other than endorsement of the propositions "piety is good" and "impiety is bad," and this is the crucial point for present purposes.

is imagined as claiming that the skeptic is inconsistent; the thought seems to be that whatever the skeptic decides,[13] this decision, given the enormous stakes involved, can only be made on the basis of some kind of principles concerning what things are genuinely good and bad. The situation in which the tyrant has placed the skeptic forces a commitment. But Sextus responds that this is not true. The skeptic will decide whatever he decides (and there is no blanket answer on what this will be) "by the preconception which accords with his ancestral laws and customs" (166); we may fill out the thought along the following lines. If he has been raised in a society that encourages resistance to authority, or strict adherence to certain prohibitions that would be violated by the action the tyrant is commanding, he is more likely to refuse to perform the appalling deed. If, on the other hand, his society is one in which obedience to the ruler is very highly valued, or where toughness and endurance are not particularly encouraged, we can more easily imagine him bowing to the tyrant's demands. Either way, the outcome is simply a result of the dispositions inculcated in the skeptic by the environment in which he was raised. As Sextus says, the skeptic does not have any *opinion* about the comparative merits of the different courses of action – which is why, to return to an earlier theme, he is in a better position even here than other people. Others are bound to have a strong belief that what they are undergoing at the tyrant's hands (being forced either to do or to suffer something atrocious) is a bad thing; but the skeptic has no such belief – he simply lets his societally induced dispositions take him in whichever direction they will.

If this reconstruction is on the right lines, one is again struck by the passivity of the skeptic's response. And this leads to several questions or concerns.[14] When faced with a dreadful choice, the skeptic will simply do whatever his upbringing has disposed him to do, without having any convictions either way about the rightness or wrongness of his action. One might wonder, first, whether this is really possible; could anyone in such a crisis be expected to remain as detached from his own reactions as Sextus says the skeptic is? No doubt automatic responses shaped by habit can and do govern much of our lives; but a case like this does seem to force

[13] Which decision the skeptic makes is not relevant either to the objection or to Sextus' response to it. It is sometimes suggested that the objection is that the skeptic will not do the *right* thing, as judged by the objector. It may indeed be hard to imagine the skeptic standing up to the tyrant, and I return to this point below. But the question at issue here is: can the skeptic make *either* decision without inconsistently committing himself to beliefs about good and bad?

[14] This paragraph and the next reuse material from Bett 2013a. I thank the editor, Roger Crisp, and Oxford University Press for permission.

a conscious and deliberate choice, in which one identifies with certain values and rejects others, and in which one is invested as a *self*, not merely as a bundle of dispositions the unfolding of which one observes as if from afar.[15] In other words, the objection to which Sextus is responding seems to have a lot more intuitive appeal than he allows. Second, supposing such detachment is after all possible, it seems very implausible that which way the skeptic reacts to the tyrant's demand is really, as he presents it, an open question; if habitual dispositions are what determines the skeptic's response, it is overwhelmingly more likely that he will take the easier course – that is, submit to the tyrant's demand rather than stand up to him. Nor is it open to Sextus to suggest that which decision *counts* as easier is itself relative to one's societally induced dispositions. Thwarting the tyrant, in this example, will result in torture, and as we saw, Sextus concedes that the skeptic is affected by pain, regardless of what dispositions his society has inculcated in him. In such situations it is difficult to imagine that these dispositions – absent the extra motivational force that they would have if (contrary to the skeptical outlook) they took the form of definite moral commitments – would prove stronger than the skeptic's natural inclinations to avoid hardship.

Quite apart from the fraught circumstances of the tyrant's challenge, the more general conformism of the skeptic, as Sextus portrays him, is another unattractive feature. It is not that Sextus wholly identifies with the ordinary person in moral matters (as he claims to do in some other contexts). For, as we have seen several times, he is quite explicit that the ordinary person believes in things that are by nature good and bad (*PH* 1.30); in this respect the ordinary person and the non-skeptical philosopher are in the same boat. But the skeptic does *do* the same kinds of things as the ordinary conventional member of his society does, and this is no accident. Challenging the status quo would require one to have some dispositions at odds with the prevailing norms; but, as we saw, Sextus cites the prevailing norms of one's society as precisely one of the central influences on the character of the skeptic's dispositions. Besides, even if we depart from the letter of Sextus' account, and allow that other factors (such as very unconventional parents) might compete with those prevailing norms in shaping the skeptic's dispositions,[16] it is still unlikely that the skeptic will step far

[15] On this, see further Chapter 7 in this volume.

[16] The possibilities here were no doubt more limited in Sextus' time than they would be in ours, given the much more homogeneous nature of ancient society. But Sextus' picture of the factors influencing the skeptic's dispositions is perhaps still excessively limited.

outside the status quo if (as will surely often be the case) that would be difficult or unpopular. This is because, again, the attitude that the skeptic has toward his own dispositions is peculiarly passive and unengaged; and this makes them far more liable to be overridden by the natural inclinations toward safety, absence of pain, etc. than they would be if they were convictions about which he cared deeply.

So how ethical can an ancient skeptic, as Sextus describes him, be? If being ethical consists simply in doing the right things at the right times (whatever we take those to be), then the answer is, it depends how well he has been brought up. A skeptic who was raised in a stable and ethically upright family and community might well have dispositions that would incline him consistently to act in the right way – that is, perform the correct behavior; one who was raised in a society in a state of disorder or collapse would presumably not. But this answer, of course, tells much less than the whole story. For one thing, as just suggested, if doing the right thing comes at great personal cost, as it sometimes will, then the skeptic's other natural inclinations may well override his ingrained dispositions to do that thing; in such situations doing the right thing may require the extra motivational force supplied by *the thought that it is* the right thing (together with some conception of why this is the case and why it matters) – and this is precisely what the skeptic does not have. Bernard Williams once accused the ethical agent, as portrayed by standard ethical theory, of having "one thought too many" in certain difficult situations (Williams 1981, 18); here the problem is that the skeptic will have "one thought too few" to stay on the ethically straight and narrow. And for another thing, even if we confine ourselves to cases where this ethically well-programmed skeptic does *not* diverge from whatever it is that one should do, most of us would not be content with a conception of ethics in which the correct performance is all that counts. The main problem is that such a person is not, in the usual sense, an ethically involved agent; even when the skeptic's dispositions do yield the correct performances, one is still inclined to object that there is "one thought too few" in the process by which that occurs.

The thought that is missing need not be the explicit thought, or even the implicit thought, that the action to be performed, or the object to be sought, is good by nature, or that whatever is thereby avoided is bad by nature. Sextus speaks as if the absence of *this* thought is the key thing that separates the skeptic from other people; and in the context of ancient Greek, and especially Stoic, ethical theory, this is understandable. But I do not think the fundamental issue is a commitment or lack of commitment

to some form of ethical objectivism – whether the form that Sextus and, in our own time, Mackie take to be implicit in everyday ethical thinking, or some more philosophically articulate variety. The crucial thing about an ethically involved agent is that, for such a person, certain things *really do matter* (and not just for self-interested reasons), and for this reason, certain things *must* be done and other things *must not* be done; and those thoughts do not obviously depend on any particular meta-ethical assumptions. Now, if that is the case, one might wonder why someone who denies that anything is by nature good, or who suspends judgment about the truth of that proposition, cannot be an ethically involved agent. The answer is that, while *someone* with one or other of those attitudes could be an ethically involved agent – I will return to this in a moment – the skeptic portrayed by Sextus could not. The reason is simply that the advantage he claims for the skeptic's outlook is precisely that things do *not* matter to him, to anything like the same extent as they do to other people; it is involvement itself – taking certain things to be really important – from which he is glad to be released, and by which he takes other people to be afflicted. If it turns out that (contrary to the prevailing philosophical assumptions of his era) there are ways of being involved, or of taking things to be important, that do not carry with them a commitment to the existence of things good or bad by nature, those will be just as much anathema to him as the ones that do; the *importance* of anything, just as much as anything's being good or bad by nature, is something that he will want to deny or suspend judgment about.

So it turns out that the central issue is the goal of tranquility itself. If everything you do is directed, in the end, at your tranquility, then you had better not care about anything too much, because this runs the risk of your tranquility being disrupted; instead, you need to cultivate an attitude of withdrawal. In the particular case of the Pyrrhonists this practical withdrawal goes hand in hand with an intellectual withdrawal; and one can certainly see how ceasing to hold any definite views about how things are, and in particular, ceasing to think of anything as really good or bad, might lead to an attitude in which nothing seems to matter very much. (Whether this is a desirable state to be in, as Sextus thinks, is of course another question; to us, the thought that "nothing matters any more" may sound more like a symptom of depression than of tranquility.) But the connection between taking tranquility as your goal and freeing yourself from beliefs (especially on the subject of the good and the bad) is far from being a necessary one; and for our current purposes, it is the goal of tranquility, not the freedom from beliefs, that is crucial.

First, others have been equally free from the belief that things are good or bad in the nature of things, and yet have been passionate about ethical or political causes; nor is there anything inconsistent in this. Good twentieth-century examples would be Jean-Paul Sartre and A. J. Ayer. Sartre's existentialism denies the possibility of any ultimate justification for one's actions. One simply has to make commitments, in the awareness that they have no fundamental basis, and thereby fashion oneself as a certain type of person; that is the point of his famous example of the young man torn between joining the Resistance and taking care of his mother.[17] As for Ayer, although he may not have held in every detail to his early emotivist theory of ethics, he clearly continued throughout his life to think of ethical discourse as non-descriptive.[18] And yet, whatever one may think of their overall personalities – both undoubtedly had their share of faults – there is no doubt that both men were ethically engaged agents as described just above: there were things that really mattered to them, and this affected how they acted and why.

A specific instance may help to bring the issue into focus. At the age of seventy-seven Ayer confronted Mike Tyson at a party and successfully persuaded him to stop harassing the young Naomi Campbell;[19] whatever his exact motivation, I assume this was an instance of such ethically engaged behavior, prompted by some thought to the effect that "this kind of thing cannot be allowed to go on." In terms of the risk involved, this does not rise to the level of Sextus' tyrant example, but it is recognizably of the same type. Now, I am not saying that Sextus' skeptic could not have done the same thing – although in fact it is probably easier to imagine him simply observing the incident from a distance and filing it away for use in another series of ethical "oppositions." ("Heavyweight champions think it good to come on to any woman who attracts them, whereas emeritus Oxford professors think this bad.") But even if the skeptic did intervene like Ayer – as he might, for example, if the society in which he was raised had very strong values concerning men's respectful behavior toward women – it would not be in an ethically engaged way. That is to say, the outcome of this confrontation would not be one in which he had any investment – because that, again, would have endangered his tranquility. And my point is that it is the skeptic's orientation toward tranquility, not

[17] See Sartre 1973, 35–8.
[18] For Ayer's early emotivism, see Ayer 1936, chapter 6. For his later position on the status of ethics, see Ayer 1973, chapter 10.
[19] See Rogers 1999, 344.

the lack of beliefs about things being in reality good and bad, that is the fundamental thing standing in the way of his ethical engagement.

One can also come at the issue from the opposite direction. It is possible to make tranquility one's goal while thinking that the truth is perfectly attainable, and that certain things – tranquility preeminent among them – really are good; this is the position of the Epicureans. And it is notable that the Epicureans, too, face criticisms having to do with their lack of ethical involvement. This is not just because of their literal, physical withdrawal in the Garden (at least in the school's initial stage); the concern is with how a commitment to *ataraxia* is compatible with full-blooded engagement in *any* kind of community, even an isolated one. One issue that has aroused considerable interest is friendship, since the Epicureans give this a very prominent place in their ethical thinking. The question is how anyone can be a genuine friend without endangering his or her tranquility; for friendship, too, seems to require having certain things (besides one's own tranquility) *really matter* to one – this is one of several respects in which a capacity for genuine friendship seems to be connected with a capacity for ethically engaged attitudes in general. It may be possible to resolve this apparent conflict, and subtle interpretations can be found in the scholarship that claim to do just this.[20] But there is no denying that the issue is at least a pressing one, and for reasons similar to the ones we have been discussing in the case of Sextus. Once again, then, it is taking *ataraxia* as the *telos*, not a withdrawal from beliefs in things really being good or bad, that seems to threaten the prospects for a genuinely ethical life.

Should the Pyrrhonist be troubled about failing to be an ethically involved agent? The answer would seem to be "of course not." If tranquility really is one's *telos*, and one takes suspension of judgment to be the means to it, then the attitude that Sextus describes makes good sense; the fact that it is unpalatable to most other people is not something that need worry him. But there are two reasons why we might at least wonder whether this is the last word on the subject. First, in the closing chapter of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (*PH* 3.280–1) Sextus speaks of himself and his school as philanthropic and wishing to cure people of the afflictions associated with definite beliefs. If he is really interested in converting other people to skepticism, then the fact that skepticism's practical attitudes will strike most people as very unattractive is at least prima facie a problem. On the other hand, this closing chapter seems to be something of an

[20] See in particular Evans 2004, with references to earlier articles.

anomaly,[21] and in general Sextus does not seem particularly concerned about whether non-skeptics pay attention to him.

Second, Sextus sometimes speaks of the skeptic as achieving happiness (*eudaimonia*). Now "happiness" was standardly understood by the non-skeptical schools as the most general term for a well-lived human life, containing all that a human being might reasonably hope to obtain or achieve – with the debate between these schools then centering on their particular conceptions of what such a life would look like. So it may look as if Sextus aspires to describe a life that would be generally recognized as fulfilling for a human being; and if this is the case, then its lack of full-blooded ethical involvement would seem to be an obstacle to his attaining that goal. If so, however, the goal is at any rate not one that he holds on to consistently. For it is a striking fact that his use of the term *eudaimonia* to describe the skeptic's life is confined to *Against the Ethicists*; in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* the term never appears in this context.[22] As we saw at the beginning, Aenesidemus was willing to refer to the Pyrrhonist as happy; and the idea of aiming to be happy, as something shared by a Pyrrhonist along with everyone else, also appears in a cryptic text summarizing the thought of Pyrrho himself.[23] So it is when he avoids the term in connection with the Pyrrhonist's life, rather than when he employs it, that Sextus seems to be an innovator in terms of his own tradition. Be that as it may, it looks as if, in one frame of mind at any rate, he regards the term *eudaimonia* as carrying some kind of dogmatic baggage that a Pyrrhonist would do best to avoid. One may speculate about what this supposed baggage might be. But one possibility is that a life that would qualify as *eudaimôn* is one that would include a wide range of ethical attitudes – a great many virtues, for example – and the full-blooded ethical involvement that these carry with them.[24] Certainly *eudaimonia* as portrayed by Aristotle and by the Stoics would fit this description.[25] And if this is right, then clearly Sextus would want nothing to do with it.

If, then, Sextus sometimes shows indications of caring what others might think of the skeptic's life as he portrays it, this seems to be the

[21] Mates 1996, 314, even proposes excising the chapter as a later interpolation (although not for the reason I am suggesting). In a work that is clearly in part a patchwork of material from earlier sources, this seems quite unwarranted – even if we are as impressed as Mates is by the incongruity between this passage and the rest of the work.

[22] This was first noticed by Striker 1990. [23] See again note 2.

[24] I have discussed other possibilities in Bett 2003. See also chapter 10 in this volume.

[25] Although there is of course a very great difference between Stoicism and common sense when it comes to the appropriate *objects* of this full-blooded concern.

exception rather than the rule. For the most part, it appears that he can quite consistently regard the skeptic's ethically impoverished attitude (as we might put it) as an advantage, whatever the rest of us might think. But then the rest of us can, with equal consistency, agree to disagree.[26]

[26] I thank the audience at the 2008 Buenos Aires conference "Ancient Pyrrhonism and Its Influence on Modern and Contemporary Philosophy," and also the participants in the 2008 NYU La Pietra workshop/conference "Skepticism: Ancient, Modern and Contemporary." The same earlier version of this chapter was presented in both places, and I learned a great deal from the discussions on both occasions.

CHAPTER 9

Living as a Skeptic

From the perspective of contemporary philosophy, the idea of *living as a skeptic* sounds distinctly odd. For one thing, very few philosophers today identify themselves as skeptics; skepticism is normally seen as a threat to be combated, not as a position to be embraced. Even someone who comes to think that skepticism about, say, our knowledge of the external world is not defeated by any of the lines of argument so far brought against it does not thereby conclude that skepticism is correct. On the contrary, the lesson to be drawn may be that we need to work harder to diagnose how the (presumably erroneous) skeptical way of thinking gets started, or to analyze the relations between skepticism at the philosophical level and our ordinary practices of gathering and assessing knowledge – which are assumed to be in order, despite the apparent power of the skeptical arguments.[1]

But second, even those few who do profess some variety of skepticism do not seem to consider the possibility that this might be the basis for a distinctive form of life. At the beginning and the end of his book *Ignorance: A Case for Scepticism*,[2] Peter Unger suggests that his skeptical arguments in epistemology call for a reshaping of our view of things: we need either to replace or rethink the meanings of terms such as "know" and "truth," terms that incorporate assumptions concerning our grasp of the world that cannot possibly be fulfilled. But this project is not actually embarked on, and in any case, no hints are offered as to how, if at all, this might affect one's life. And something similar is true of moral skepticism. J. L. Mackie and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong have both argued for positions that they themselves characterized as moral skepticism:[3] in Mackie's case, that there are no objective values, and in Sinnott-Armstrong's, that moral nihilism – the view that nothing is right or wrong, good or bad, and so

[1] I am thinking in particular of Stroud 1984. [2] Unger 1975.
[3] Mackie 1977; Sinnott-Armstrong 2006.

on – cannot be ruled out. But both of them insist that this does not make the sort of practical difference that one might have thought would follow; ordinary moral beliefs can be held on to as before, and can even be given certain sorts of justifications. Skepticism, it seems, can affect our theoretical view of ourselves, as knowers or as moral beings, but it makes no difference to how we actually go about our lives. It would be interesting to explore the reasons for this, but that would be beyond the scope of this chapter;[4] everything I have said so far is designed to emphasize the contrast with skepticism in the ancient world, rather than to mark out a topic in its own right. I will simply add that we can also speak, in a non-philosophical way, about persons of a skeptical disposition, and it may be that an everyday skepticism of this sort is more suited to have a practical effect than skepticism in contemporary philosophy seems to have. I shall return to this point in closing.

In any case, ancient Greek skepticism *was* intended by its proponents to be lived – in this it was no different from other ancient Greek philosophies, at least those originating in the Hellenistic period – and it was assumed by others that its success as a philosophical outlook depended in part on its ability to be lived. This is why the various charges of *apraxia* leveled against skepticism – charges to the effect that a truly skeptical frame of mind would make it impossible to act – were taken very seriously by skepticism's critics and also by the skeptics themselves. In this chapter I propose to give an account of what it means to live as a skeptic, and then to consider to what extent some version of this account might still be viable or worthwhile today.

The centerpiece of ancient skepticism is suspension of judgment. This is clearly true of the Pyrrhonist skeptic Sextus Empiricus, the majority of whose extensive surviving writings consist of considerations for and against a great number of philosophical and other theoretical positions; these considerations are supposed to be evenly balanced, and the purported outcome is that one cannot but suspend judgment about the issue in question – one no longer takes a position either way. It looks as if versions of suspension of judgment – though not necessarily the same as Sextus' – also prevailed earlier in the Pyrrhonist tradition, all the way back to Pyrrho himself; but the details are much less clear, since we have only fragments

[4] Some have appealed in this context to a contemporary "insulation" of philosophy from ordinary life; on this, see especially Burnyeat 1984. But however accurate it may be, this has more the air of a redescription than of an explanation. For some doubts about monolithic claims concerning "insulation," see Bett 1993.

and second- or third-hand reports to go on.[5] Moreover, there is clear (though again indirect) evidence of an argumentative activity designed to lead to suspension of judgment in the Academy during the Hellenistic period, and this is what has led to this phase of the school being called the skeptical Academy, even though the term "skepticism" is not one these Academics used of themselves.[6] In all these cases, the suspension of judgment is meant to be quite unrestricted as to subject matter – one suspends judgment about *everything* – although there are a number of questions concerning what exactly this amounts to.

The alleged universality of the skeptics' suspension of judgment is, indeed, the basis for the *apraxia* charge leveled against them by their opponents: if one suspends judgment about *everything*, how can one decide what to do – in fact, how can one act at all? Surely any kind of human action is explicable only in light of the agent's taking certain things to be the case and other things not to be the case. This charge clearly presupposes that the skeptic's suspension of judgment extends to topics that would be relevant to one's everyday behavior – not only to, as we might say, "purely theoretical" topics. In the case of Sextus Empiricus, at least, it is not hard to see how this might be so. Although his discussions are largely focused on controversies among philosophers and other theorists, they often put into question things that, at least on the face of it, all of us who live and act in the world must take for granted: for example, that there are such things as motion, bodies, places, and times; that certain things are true and that, some of the time at least, we can tell which these are; and that certain things are good and others bad.[7] If one suspends judgment about all these things and more, how can one function at all?

Both the Academic skeptics and the Pyrrhonists felt the need to respond to challenges of this kind. The two major Academic skeptics, Arcesilaus and Carneades, are reported to have argued that action, and even successful action yielding happiness, is possible for one who suspends judgment (Sextus, *M* 7.150–89, Cicero, *Academica* 2.99–104). While the details are complicated and controversial,[8] in both cases the responses seem to

[5] For Pyrrho, see Svavarsson 2010; Bett 2014; for Aenesidemus, who later originated the way of thinking, claiming allegiance to Pyrrho, to which Sextus eventually belonged, see Schofield 2007; Hankinson 2010.

[6] See Brittain 2005; Thorsrud 2010; Allen 2011.

[7] I choose examples from each of the three major divisions of philosophy recognized in the Hellenistic period and later, according to which Sextus organizes a great deal of his material (although not in Sextus' order): physics, logic, and ethics.

[8] See Brittain 2005, section 5; Obdrzalek 2006; Thorsrud 2010, sections III and V; Vogt 2010, section II.

have involved the idea that some of our impressions of things may present themselves as more attractive or persuasive than others, and that this can allow the kinds of discriminations needed to make choices and to act, without our having to commit ourselves to their truth.[9] Whatever the success of these moves, the goal is clearly to show that life is possible for someone who comprehensively suspends judgment. As for Sextus, he tells us that the skeptic is able to act by following the appearances (*PH* 1.21–4).[10] We may be unable to tell how things are in their ultimate nature; what exactly motion, body, place, and time, or truth, or good and bad, really are may forever elude us, and hence we may not even be able to demonstrate their existence in a rationally compelling way. But there certainly appear to be bodies in motion, and other bodies at rest, in certain times and places, and some things certainly strike us as good in certain circumstances, and others as bad. These everyday impressions are sufficient for us to settle on some actions and avoid others, and they do not depend on our having reached a resolution on any questions about the real nature of things. Whether these everyday impressions should be accorded the status of *beliefs*, and if so, what is their content, are questions of some controversy in recent scholarship.[11] For our purposes, the important point is that Sextus takes the ways things appear to us in everyday experience (that is, both our sensory experience and everyday ideas in our heads) to allow us an entirely adequate basis for action and choice, without involving us in any way in commitments concerning how things really are; *that* is the area in which the skeptic is said to practice universal suspension of judgment.

The skeptics, then, suspend judgment, and they argue that this is quite compatible with the living of a human life. But this does not yet amount to a clearly defined *way* of life. What is the point of engaging in this practice? Here the two skeptical traditions diverge. It is not clear that the Academics had anything helpful to say on this question. There are indications that Arcesilaus may have seen suspension of judgment as a matter of intellectual

[9] The coherence of this idea has recently been challenged by Perin 2013, section 1. Perin's argument is a strong one; however, the fact remains that this seems to have been how Arcesilaus and Carneades argued.

[10] For an indication that this issue also exercised early Pyrrhonists, see Diogenes Laertius 9.62, and for discussion, see Bett 2000a, chapter 2.4.

[11] Classic presentations of these issues are the essays in Burnyeat and Frede 1997 (including Burnyeat 1983 and Burnyeat 1984); see also Brennan 1994; Perin 2010b; Vogt 2012b. Detailed overviews of the state of the debate can be found in Morison 2014, section 3.4, and Brennan and Roberts 2018, section 4.

integrity;[12] for Carneades the picture is even less clear.[13] But at any rate, the idea of a distinctive skeptical way of life does not seem to have figured in Academic thinking. On the other hand the Pyrrhonists, from first to last, located in suspension of judgment an important practical payoff; and here, if anywhere, the notion of a skeptical way of life is to be found. From now on I shall concentrate solely on the writings of Sextus Empiricus, where the chances of getting clear on this are by far the best.[14]

The payoff, according to Sextus (following his Pyrrhonist predecessors[15]), is *ataraxia*, tranquility or freedom from worry. Suspension of judgment releases one from a great deal of turmoil that afflicts those who hold definite opinions or who are endeavoring to do so. Sextus tells two, seemingly rather different, stories about why this is so. According to the first, the skeptic starts out as someone seeking *ataraxia* by means of discovering the truth (*PH* 1.12, 26), troubled by the great variety of views about things and hoping to sift through them and determine which are true and which false. The trouble, then, seems to reside in one's uncertainty, and settling how things are will, it is hoped, release one from this. However, this is not what actually happens. Instead, the conflicts in opinions and impressions, on whatever subject one investigates, continue to impress one, and the resolution of these conflicts never occurs; rather, the opposing positions strike one as equally powerful, and so, finding no more inclination to adopt any one of these positions over any other, one is led to suspend judgment. But now, the result of suspending judgment is precisely the *ataraxia* one was seeking in the first place. Sextus does not explain why this is so. But it looks as if, instead of agonizing over where the truth lies, one comes to the attitude that this really doesn't matter and that the project of discovering the truth is very possibly a fool's errand; it has

[12] For a forceful presentation of this case, see Cooper 2004.

[13] Obdrzalek 2006, 243, calls it "completely unclear."

[14] John Sellars pointed out that a Buddhist model might furnish another possible way in which skepticism could be of practical help today. I would not dispute this, and in fact some of my remarks in the later part of the chapter about the contemporary viability of skeptical ways of thinking might either apply to or else be usefully addressed by a Buddhist-style skepticism. However, the relation of Buddhism to skepticism, and particularly to ancient Greek skepticism, is a very delicate question; for a provocative recent volume on that issue, see Beckwith 2015. For reasons both of simplicity and of my own uncertainty about the issue, I will confine myself to the model most fully available to us from ancient Greek thought itself.

[15] For early Pyrrhonism's adherence to the same goal, see Aristocles in Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 14.18.4, Sextus, *M* 11.141, with Bett 2000a, chapter 2, sections 2 and 3. The term *ataraxia* is not attested in connection with Aenesidemus. But the contrast he is said to have drawn between the torments afflicting those who pursue the vain search for knowledge and the happiness of the Pyrrhonist (Photius, *Bibliotheca* 169b21–30) suggests that he considers freedom from trouble a central component of this happiness.

not led to any successful results so far, and it involves those engaged in it in nothing but trouble – trouble from which, by suspending judgment, one can float free. And then, having once come to experience the connection between suspension of judgment and tranquility, one embarks on a new project in which suspension of judgment, with the accompanying tranquility, is itself the goal. At this point one is a full-fledged skeptic, and it is the producing and maintaining of suspension of judgment in which, according to an oft-quoted sentence of *PH* (1.8), the skeptic's "ability" (*dunamis*) consists.

As I said, Sextus does not elaborate on this account; while the outlines are fairly clear, much of what I have said in the last paragraph is inference rather than a simple reading of what Sextus actually says. However, in several places he does address directly the question of why suspension of judgment leads to tranquility (*PH* 1.27–30, 3.235–8, *M* 11.110–67), and here a rather different picture emerges. Instead of suspension of judgment generally, it is suspension of judgment specifically about good and bad that results in *ataraxia*. People who believe that some things are really, or by nature, good and others bad – and according to Sextus this includes both non-skeptical philosophers and ordinary people (*PH* 1.30) – are greatly troubled; they care desperately about getting or keeping the good things and freeing themselves from or avoiding the bad things. By contrast, the skeptic, who by definition lacks any of these beliefs to the effect that some things are by nature good and others by nature bad, is freed from all these troubles; the stakes for the skeptic are simply much lower than for everyone else. Sextus does acknowledge that the skeptic experiences pain, hunger, and other disagreeable feelings that occur whether or not one has certain opinions; as he tells us, the skeptic's goal (*telos*) is *ataraxia* in matters of opinion and "moderate feeling" (*metriopatheia*) in matters over which we have no control (*PH* 1.25). But even here the skeptic is better off than other people, and his "moderate" level of feeling is in part the result of his suspension of judgment. For while everyone experiences pain, hunger, etc., the non-skeptic additionally holds the opinion that this is in reality a bad thing – precisely the kind of opinion that causes violent turmoil and that the skeptic is free of (*PH* 1.30). Indeed, Sextus even suggests that this opinion may be a source of greater distress than the pain or hunger itself (*PH* 3.236, *M* 11.159–61).

It is not obvious how we are supposed to combine these two accounts – the one about an initial quest for *ataraxia* via the discovery of truth, which instead leads to suspension of judgment and achieves its original end in this unexpected way, and the one about the turmoil caused by believing

that some things are by nature good and others bad, and the skeptic's freedom from all such beliefs. Sextus clearly sees no tension between them, since in one place he freely switches back and forth between the two (*PH* 1.25–30). And indeed, there is no reason why both might not be true at the same time, with beliefs about good and bad being an especially serious source of distress, but *ataraxia* also being derived from suspension of judgment about things more generally. Another possibility is that beliefs about good and bad may be intertwined with broader beliefs about the nature of things, so that the two accounts are not as distinct as I have made them sound. But Sextus never pursues these lines of thought, and so we are left in some uncertainty as to how the two stories are supposed to relate to one another.

How, then, should we imagine the life of a skeptic of the sort that Sextus claims to be? First of all, it is a life filled with philosophical activity of a particular kind. Sextus is ambivalent about whether to call skepticism a philosophy – deliberately so, I believe; he wants to shake up the reader's intuitions about what philosophy actually is.[16] The skeptic is not, of course, a philosopher in the sense of someone who puts forward definite theories. What he does is to engage in philosophical argument on multiple sides of a question. As I said, Sextus says that the skeptic is marked by having the "ability" to assemble opposing arguments and impressions on any given topic in such a way that they have, for the reader or listener, the characteristic of "equal strength" (*isostheneia*); one is no more inclined toward any one of these opposing positions over any others, and this results in suspension of judgment, which in turn yields tranquility (*PH* 1.8). With the partial exception of *PH* 1, which is a general account of what skepticism is, Sextus' surviving writings consist almost entirely of this kind of procedure; but it is a fair assumption that the same kind of procedure was deployed by the Pyrrhonists in oral form as well.

This argumentative activity may be used to try to convert others to skepticism. But it is important to note that it is also used by the skeptics themselves to maintain their own skepticism. For this kind of skepticism – unlike the usual kinds of skepticism encountered in contemporary philosophy – is not a conclusion reached once and for all, or indeed any kind of result attained once and for all; instead, it is an ongoing activity, in which suspension of judgment continues to be produced or renewed. The skeptic's suspension of judgment cannot be assumed to be stable over the long term. One is liable to lapse into the holding of definite beliefs, with

[16] I have discussed this in Chapter 1 in this volume. The ambivalence is also noted by Tor 2014, n. 32.

the deleterious consequences that Sextus takes to follow from that; hence the need for a routine in which one regularly rehearses the considerations for and against competing views on the same subjects, generates a situation of "equal strength" among them, and suspends judgment as a result. The various sets of Pyrrhonist Modes, or standardized forms of argument, that Sextus lays out in *PH* 1 (31–186), seem especially designed for this purpose; but most of Sextus' voluminous surviving corpus can also be understood as, at least in part, directed to this goal.

Here, then, is one central aspect of the skeptic's life: the persistent arranging of arguments and impressions in opposition to one another so as to produce "equal strength" and therefore suspension of judgment, and therefore continued *ataraxia*. It is this that is the most plausible candidate for being the *skepsis*, the "inquiry," that is alluded to in the title "skeptic" (*skeptikos* or "inquirer") itself. In the opening sentences of *PH* Sextus makes it sound as if the skeptic is someone who is still searching for the truth – by contrast with those who think they have discovered it or who have decided that it cannot be found (*PH* 1.1–3). But his actual description of what skepticism is, in *PH* 1.8 and elsewhere,[17] suggests much more the posture of someone who has already decided that the most effective route to *ataraxia* is suspension of judgment, and who therefore concentrates on producing suspension of judgment. This process, as we have seen, involves the consideration of arguments pro and contra, and so it is not absurd to call it "inquiry"; it is also open-minded as to the ultimate possibility or impossibility of the truth being discovered (since to have come to a decision on this question would already be a violation of suspension of judgment). But if "inquiry" is taken, as it naturally might be, to suggest an active and serious search for the truth, then it is misleading as applied to a skeptic of Sextus' variety; the skeptic is someone who is looking to maintain *ataraxia*, and who has found a way of doing it in which inquiry, in that sense, has no place.[18] To be sure, Sextus does describe the skeptic as someone who starts out an inquirer – who aims to discover the truth and to attain *ataraxia* that way; but the shift from this attitude to skepticism itself is precisely the abandonment of inquiry in that sense. Still, the skeptic's characteristic

[17] See especially *PH* 1.18.

[18] For interpretations more sympathetic to the notion of the skeptic as a genuine inquirer, see Perin 2010a; Vogt 2012a, chapter 5. Other interpretations that either dismiss Sextus' claim to be an "inquirer" or that understand "inquiry" as something other than a search for truth include Palmer 2000; Striker 2001; Grgic 2006; and Marchand 2010.

activity does resemble inquiry (in that sense) in that it consists in a great deal of philosophical or theoretical reflection.

But the skeptic is of course not only a philosopher (if that is the right word); he is also a human being who engages in everyday human activities. As we saw, the *apraxia* charge, the charge that a skeptic cannot act, is answered by Sextus with the claim that the skeptic follows appearances, and that this is sufficient for choice and action but does not violate suspension of judgment. In the chapter in which he discusses this, he lists four major categories of "appearances" that are especially important in guiding the skeptic's behavior. Examining these will tell us a little more about what a skeptical life might actually look like.

The four categories of appearances, in Sextus' own words, are as follows: "one consists in the guidance of nature, one in the necessity of how we are affected, one in the handing down of laws and customs, and one in the teaching of forms of expertise" (*PH* 1.23). He goes on to say that by the first "we are naturally liable to perceive and think," by the second "hunger drives us to food, thirst to drink," by the third "we accept being pious as good and being impious as bad, in terms of ordinary life," and by the fourth "we are not inactive in the forms of expertise we adopt" (*PH* 1.24). The first two of these can fairly be called natural and the other two cultural. The point of the first, I take it, is that we are born with certain perceptual and cognitive abilities, and these in obvious ways shape how we interact with and think about the world. We see things in terms of the ways our eyes equip us to see them, and we engage in certain characteristic kinds of thought-process – for example, not being willing to accept obvious contradictions. We do not need to endorse these ways of perceiving and thinking as warranted or legitimate, or as giving us the truth about things; we simply *have* these tendencies to perceive and think in certain particular ways, and these add up to one major type of "appearances" that affect what we do. The second category consists of natural urges that prompt us to action: one feels hungry, and that by itself leads one to eat, without any opinions on our part being required.

The consistency of the third and fourth categories with suspension of judgment is a little less obvious. Does the third not involve a commitment to the *opinion* that piety is good and impiety bad? And does not the teaching of any expertise involve signing on to numerous intellectual commitments? Concerning piety, Sextus' answer must surely center around the qualification "in terms of ordinary life" (*biôtikôs*); this must be intended to mark a way of accepting the goodness of piety and the badness of impiety that does not commit one to believing that piety is in

reality good and impiety bad. The explanation that I find most satisfactory is that the skeptic engages in the ordinary religious practices of his society, but *merely* as a matter of practice, without invoking any doctrines.[19] These would include rituals of various kinds; they might also include certain speech acts such as prayers. But the idea would be that the skeptic does these things because he has been trained to do them, through having lived in a society in which these things are routine, rather than because he accepts the truth of certain propositions about what the gods are like and how we should relate to them. It is not in fact clear that Sextus has an entirely consistent account when it comes to religion; elsewhere he seems to attribute to ordinary people just the sort of religious beliefs that he here seems anxious to distance himself from (which puts ordinary people in the same boat as philosophers on this issue – *PH* 1.161–2, 3.218–19, *M* 9.50, 191–2), and yet he is also eager to claim that he is religious in the same way as ordinary people (as opposed to philosophers) are religious (*PH* 3.2, *M* 9.49).[20] But the idea of acting according to the laws and customs of one's society, simply because one has had these habits inculcated in one through living in that society and not because of endorsing the norms that those habits might seem to reflect, nonetheless appears to be Sextus' model for how the skeptic acts in what we may broadly call the ethical and religious domains.[21]

Something similar must also be the case with the teaching of expertise. Many kinds of expertise can in fact be understood, in the main at any rate, as forms of "knowing how" as opposed to "knowing that" (to use jargon from contemporary Anglophone philosophy). Dancing, swimming, riding a bicycle, or driving a car would be obvious examples; to be successful in these pursuits, one needs to learn to *do* certain things, not to grasp the truth of certain propositions. One may wonder how far this model can be extended; in particular, medicine, an expertise that Sextus himself pursued (*PH* 2.238, *M* 1.260, 11.47), might seem not to fit it – surely a successful doctor must know some medical truths, not just medical techniques. But Sextus would deny this, and he was not alone; the Empiric school of medicine, to which he belonged, was notable precisely for restricting itself to methods of cure that had proven themselves over time, without speculation about what it was in the inner workings of the body that made them work. In any case, varieties of expertise that require no absorption of

[19] I have discussed this further in Bett 2009 and Bett 2015c.
[20] For further specifics, again see the works cited in note 19.
[21] Another text bearing on this is *M* 11.166.

doctrine, but can be mastered entirely as know-how, are the ones that Sextus can clearly avail himself of consistently with his skepticism.

It looks, then, as if the skeptic has available to him a pretty broad repertoire of actions. In fact, from the outside a skeptic might be hard to distinguish from an ordinary member of society. Since the skeptic was, we may assume, both born with the same native human capacities as other people and raised in the same manner as any normal member of his society, and since these native capacities and manners of upbringing are what largely shape how he acts, according to the passage that we have just been examining, it looks as if a skeptic would be hard to pick out of a crowd – so long as skepticism itself did not come up as a topic. But if the skeptic goes about doing very much the same kinds of things most people do, it does not follow that he is not in certain ways – on the inside, as we might say – highly unusual.

A helpful way into this issue may be to note the character of the skeptic's conformism. The skeptic, as I just said, does what he was born and raised to do. But he does so not because he has decided that these are the right ways to behave, as many conservative members of society, and also some philosophers (of Edmund Burke's temperament, perhaps), might decide; he does so *just* because these natural and cultural influences are the ones that have shaped his dispositions (and this "because" is causal, not justificatory). In fact, "conformism" is perhaps not the right word for this kind of stance, since "conformism" might suggest some kind of endorsement of the patterns of behavior engaged in; perhaps the skeptic's situation could better be described as one of conformity *without* conformism. Now, this may of course also be true of another, more unthinking segment of society; no doubt many people have been raised in certain habits, have never given much thought to them, and simply act according to them without reflecting on their legitimacy. Yet the skeptic is very different from this group as well. The skeptic has reached the position of letting these natural and societal habits determine his behavior not through a lack of thinking, but by means of a highly self-conscious process of reflecting on all kinds of candidate theories about the way things really are, including theories – some of them very non-conformist – about the way human beings ought to behave, and suspending judgment about all of them. As I mentioned, this process of generating suspension of judgment is ongoing and it is deliberate; as we can now see, one of its effects is to guarantee that nothing else will serve as a determinant of the skeptic's actions than the bundle of natural and societal dispositions with which he has been endowed.

And this in turn, as has often been remarked, leads to an extraordinary passivity in the skeptic's way of acting.[22] Given the dispositions that I just mentioned, the skeptic is inclined for or against particular actions on specific occasions. He is aware of these inclinations, and observes their effect on his behavior. But he does not get involved with them in any way; he simply lets them do their work, watching them unfold just as if it was not *him* to which they were happening at all. In fact, there is a sense in which the skeptic is not fully an agent, or in different terminology, not fully a self. If we think of an agent or a self as having, or being, a cluster of concerns, priorities, and perspectives on the world in which he, she, or it is invested, and which shape one's choices and actions through that very engagement, then the skeptic does not qualify. True, the skeptic has concerns, priorities, and perspectives of a kind – these are given by the dispositions ingrained in him – but his attitude toward them is spectacularly disengaged. Indeed, that is the whole point. The project of suspending judgment, so that one does not come down on the side of anything's *really being* any particular way, in terms of its nature or its value, ensures that one will not treat one's own concerns and priorities as tracking anything that really matters; they may push one in various directions, and there is nothing wrong with that, but they do not constitute genuine commitments, and hence they are not fundamental to who one is. Nor, as far as I can see, is anything else.

To repeat, what one gets for one's suspension of judgment is *ataraxia*. This was the goal from the start, and this is what suspension of judgment has been found to produce. And in fact one can see how *ataraxia* might be thought to go along with the disengaged mindset that I have just outlined; if you do not really care about anything, you have nothing to worry about. In any case, this is what the life of the skeptic, as Sextus portrays him, would be like: a vigorous debater, with the goal not of winning any debates but of bringing them all to a stalemate; and in the rest of life, as a result of this very stalemate, an outward conformer, calmly going about his business, but lacking any inner commitment to or involvement with the activities he performs.

So, how much of this could we accept today? One obvious point is that many of us care about a good many other things besides tranquility. Some might say that if tranquility is to be achieved only with the radical disengagement that we have just seen, that is too high a price to pay;

[22] This was first really brought to the fore by Burnyeat 1983; I also discuss aspects of it in Chapters 7 and 8 in this volume.

maintaining a robust sense of agency or selfhood is at least as important.[23] But even aside from that, it may well seem that making tranquility the only goal is distorted and unrealistic; there are other things worth caring about at least as much, even if they are likely to come at the expense of some tranquility. Of course, if caring about these other things depends on believing in some set of objects or purposes that are genuinely good, the procedure of inducing suspension of judgment might eventually lead someone to stop caring about them. But for someone who has not yet embarked on the skeptical procedure, and who currently does care seriously about additional things besides tranquility, that is no reason to get started toward skepticism.

Suppose, however, that we accept *ataraxia* as the goal. Can something like Sextus' method appeal to us today as a plausible means of achieving it? Here too I think there are a number of problems. First, to touch again on the skeptic's disengagement or lack of investment in anything, it seems quite possible that for many people today this would actually be an impediment to tranquility rather than an accompaniment to it. In modern times, the thought that nothing really matters is often associated with the perception that, perhaps because of the fading of traditional religious certainties, there are no longer any secure values to cling to, or that science has shown that we live in a value-free universe. And these ideas, for those who are gripped by them, seem to be much more often experienced as disturbing than as comforting. Such existential angst is usually seen as a distinctively modern phenomenon, although I am not sure why such thoughts could not have occurred to someone in the ancient world in times of great transition or unrest. In any case, given these trends in modern culture and thought, the sort of disengaged mindset that Sextus' skepticism produces is at least as likely to create new worries as to be linked with tranquility. It is a mindset that has generally been seen as one that we need to get beyond by means of inventive counter-measures, such as

[23] Christof Rapp emphasized that there is a range of notions of agency, and that many of my concerns in the next few paragraphs about the palatability of skepticism to a contemporary audience depend on a relatively robust conception of what it is to be an agent. This is a fair point. However, I would emphasize in return that the disengaged, stripped-down kind of agency that is implicit in Sextus' picture is at the extreme opposite end of the spectrum; I suspect that very few people would be comfortable with the *degree* of passivity his account seems to involve. Still, this is not really essential to what I am trying to argue. My main focus in these paragraphs is on the fact that the link between suspension of judgment and tranquility, at least for us today, is considerably less secure than Sextus seems to suppose. For this purpose it suffices that the sorts of disturbed attitudes I describe are *one* likely reaction to suspension of judgment; I do not deny that for some people and in some circumstances, Sextus' route from suspension of judgment to tranquility, or something close to it, might indeed work.

Nietzsche's call for *creating* new values[24] or the existentialist project in which one makes a radical choice and thereby makes of oneself a certain type of person.[25] These are ways of *becoming* engaged agents *despite* the lack of any values built into the world, which is virtually the opposite of the path taken by Sextus' skeptic.

Something similar is true when we consider one of Sextus' explanations for why the result of suspension of judgment is *ataraxia*. This was the idea that someone who lacks any definite beliefs to the effect that some things are really, or by nature, good and others bad will be released from the immense anxiety and turmoil experienced by those who do have such beliefs. Now, there may be some people for whom this is true: for example, people who previously cared a great deal about the terrible things going on in the world, but who, on ceasing to have the definite view that anything is *really* bad (or, for that matter, good), find themselves less troubled by these things. There may also be some objects about which people generally care too much, so that coming to doubt whether they have any real value would make these people calmer and less overwrought. On the other hand, it is equally likely that for many people, ceasing to believe that *anything* has any real value would result not in tranquility, but in despair born of a sense of meaninglessness[26] – something that could be escaped only by either renewing one's sense of real value in the world, say, by a religious conversion, or by the sort of Nietzschean or existentialist moves that I mentioned

[24] See, e.g., Nietzsche 1966, section 211.

[25] For a succinct statement of this project, see Sartre 1973.

[26] Bruno Haas objected that such a person has *not*, in fact, shed the commitment to the reality of value; there remains a feeling that something important is lacking, and this can only be explained by a residual sense that some things (in this case, the very presence or absence of an objective order of values) really are good or bad. By contrast, someone who had completed the readjustment of attitude described by Sextus would be content with having ceased to believe that there is anything of real value and calmer in light of this. Now, the last part of this is clearly, indeed almost tautologically, correct. But my point might be put by saying that many people today would be unable to complete the progression that Sextus describes; in their case, giving up on the belief in real values just would not have the effect that Sextus supposes, but another and much darker effect. And I am not persuaded that this effect itself presupposes a continued belief in some form of objective value. These people need not hold the self-contradictory belief that being unable to confirm that there is anything of real value (positive or negative) is itself objectively bad. They may very well be genuinely uncommitted to the existence of anything of real value, but find this a source of horror rather than, as Sextus claims, tranquility. We might say that they would *prefer* it if, contrary to their new attitude, there definitely *were* things of real value; we might even say that, if there were and they came to be aware of this, they *would* believe that it was objectively a good thing. But none of this requires that an actual belief in real value is somehow still in operation. If it is asked why they find the absence of a commitment to real value horrifying, the answer is "they just do"; horror and despair do not have to have grounds. The contemporary moral skeptics I mentioned at the beginning, who seem to believe that ordinary moral thinking need not even be affected by the possibility of moral nihilism, seem curiously dismissive of this possibility.

just now (and that could not have occurred to Sextus[27]), whereby one retrieves a sense of having a meaningful place in the world and comes to care about the course of events even while holding on to the insight (as such thinkers would regard it) that nothing is of value in itself. Thinking that things really matter can be a burden, and Sextus plays this idea for all it is worth; but equally, *not* thinking that anything matters can be a burden, and Sextus' outlook wholly fails to take this into account.

What of Sextus' other explanation for suspension of judgment's resulting in *ataraxia*? To recall, this was the idea that one is released from the worries associated with wondering where the truth lies but not being able to pin it down. Now, it is certainly possible that someone might come to see the considerations for or against various competing positions on some topic as being equally powerful, and in light of that very point stop caring about the matter one way or the other. But it is far from clear that this would be the inevitable result. If someone is troubled by not having been able to determine where the truth lies, why should finding the competing considerations equally powerful not make this trouble worse rather than better? This development would seem to make the chances of success even more remote, and it is by no means obvious why the uniform reaction to this would be to give up on the search and stop minding that it had led to this inconclusive result. This is especially true in cases where discovering the truth might make a big difference to our lives. Suppose one is hot on the trail of a cure for cancer, or a method for reversing climate change. Would finding that the evidence equally supports and conflicts with a potentially helpful theory on one of these subjects be a recipe for serenity and quietude, or for great disappointment (which one might get beyond only by throwing oneself with renewed vigor into the search)? The latter would seem much more probable.

Thus the tranquility that is central to the Pyrrhonist conception of skepticism as a way of life seems problematic in a number of ways. It is not clear why we should wish to pursue it to the exclusion of everything else, and neither of the two accounts Sextus gives of why it regularly follows suspension of judgment seem plausible. One can think of cases in which tranquility would be the result, but there are also cases where the reverse would be true; it depends on the circumstances, the character of the persons involved, and the nature of the topic on which suspension of judgment is exercised. This may be a boring conclusion, but Sextus just

[27] Because, for him (as for the ancients in general, I think), genuinely caring about something and thinking that it is by nature good or bad seem to belong inextricably together.

does not seem able to make as much of *ataraxia* as he would like. There may be special features of the modern world that make it particularly hard for him to make his case to us. I mentioned the widespread modern perception of, and nervousness about, a breakdown in stable values, as well as our ability to affect the world in ways that Sextus could not have dreamed of; it may also be that the appeal of tranquility as a central goal was simply greater in Sextus' day than in ours – I am not sure.[28] In any case, I do not think that differences between our world and Sextus' are the full explanation for the difficulties surrounding tranquility; the claim that it reliably results from suspension of judgment should have seemed dubious in his own day as well as in ours.

Now, if one ceases to take tranquility as seriously as Sextus does, the idea of skepticism as a way of life loses its focus. If not for tranquility as the goal and as the reliable result of suspension of judgment, it is not clear what the point would be of suspending judgment on all possible occasions. But a further point – and this is a significant difference between Sextus' world and our own – is that suspension of judgment is just not available to us on anything like the same range of subjects as it was in the ancient world.[29] Even in his day, Sextus' claim to be able to produce suspension of judgment on *all* questions examined by philosophers and other theorists seems strikingly bold; might there not be issues where the arguments were overwhelmingly on one side rather than the other, and where presenting the opposing cases in such a way as to make them equally persuasive was therefore impossible? One might reply that the skeptic's "ability" at assembling oppositions includes the ability to manipulate the evidence and the arguments so as to bring the opposing sides into "equal strength." But aside from the concerns that this may raise about underhandedness, it is not clear how it would be supposed to work when the person at whom this procedure is directed is the skeptic himself – which, as we saw, is an important aspect of the skeptic's activity; how does one manipulate *oneself* into finding two sides equally persuasive when the balance of the arguments clearly favors one side?

Be that as it may, for us there is clearly no chance of suspension of judgment on all theoretical subjects. There is a vast range of subjects, particularly in the natural sciences but not only there, where we simply

[28] *Ataraxia* is of course the Epicureans' ideal as well as the Pyrrhonists', and the Stoic sage also achieves something recognizably similar. But it was not universal in this role among philosophies in the Hellenistic period and later antiquity, and besides, it is not clear that Greco-Roman culture in general placed as much value on it as these philosophies did.

[29] I discuss this further in Chapter 12 in this volume.

know too much for suspension of judgment to be an option; a great many questions have been settled in a way that neither Sextus nor any of his contemporaries could have imagined. And they have been settled not just at a theoretical level; the answers to these questions have been incorporated into our lives in the myriad forms of technology that surround us all the time. Although we of course still have a great many unanswered questions even in the sciences, the basic science that underlies, say, television or antibiotics is not going to be put into question. In the ancient world, it is fair to say, much less about the nature of the world was settled, and much more could be debated only at the level of abstract argument, where it was not unreasonable to think that opposing positions might be equally balanced. And so the notion of a *universal* suspension of judgment, while perhaps an exaggerated hope even in Sextus' time, was far more realistic for him than it could ever be for us. Where suspension of judgment remains a serious option for us is especially in subjects such as ethics or religion – or, we might add, philosophy – where fundamental assumptions are open to question and there are few, if any, agreed-on methods of proceeding. A latter-day skeptic might be advised to concentrate mainly on areas such as these.

So what is left of the idea of living as a skeptic? If we discount the idea of skepticism as a sure route to tranquility, and if we give up on the idea that suspension of judgment is available on all subjects, we are left, it seems to me, with a directive to look at all sides of a question whenever possible, to be suspicious of dogmatic claims delivered with bluster rather than evidence, and to suspend judgment whenever the case on each side of the question seems to be equally strong. The standards used to judge when this is so could themselves be open to question in the same way, but as Sextus says, in the end we have no alternative but to rely on the ways of perceiving and thinking that we are born with and/or trained in. It is likely that this kind of skeptical scrutiny would generally be exercised in the more contentious subjects such as I mentioned just now – in their manifestations in public debates, just as much as in more arcane academic contexts; but there is no reason why it could not equally be trained on unresolved questions in, say, physics or biology or linguistics, supposing one was capable of understanding the issues. It is possible that following this program would bring a measure of inner calm; I did not mean to imply that the prospect of tranquility is to be absolutely dismissed. But as I suggested, this is no more than a possibility – it depends on individual issues and personalities; some might be more tranquil clinging to certainties, regardless of the evidence. Yet even if suspension of judgment about,

say, central questions of value induces vertigo rather than tranquility – which, as I said, it is often thought to do in the modern world – there may be a compensating sense of satisfaction at one's own intellectual honesty.

Beyond any benefits to the individual, however, a skepticism of this scaled-down contemporary variety – which, it may be noted, is something much closer to the non-philosophical notion of a skeptical temperament that I mentioned at the beginning than to the positions generally labeled skepticism in contemporary philosophy – might have the potential to benefit society more generally. In a society such as the United States, much of which is increasingly fragmenting into two parallel societies (roughly speaking, conservative and liberal) having different and deeply entrenched values, different media outlets, and different lifestyles in different locations, and where politics and even civil discourse is becoming increasingly dysfunctional as a result, it might be a very good thing if there were more skeptics around;[30] equally, in societies that are less fragmented, a certain amount of skepticism in the population might be a valuable safeguard against this or other dangerous social developments. At the end of *PH* (3.280) Sextus says that skeptics are philanthropic and wish to cure the dogmatists' rashness. While there is nothing either in Sextus' own skepticism or in the contemporary counterpart I have been sketching that would ensure such a benevolent disposition, I think we have good reason to hope, or wish, for a measure of such "philanthropic" skepticism in ourselves and in those around us.[31]

[30] I wrote the original version of this chapter in 2014. It is fair to say that the trends I identify and lament here have become considerably more obvious in the intervening years – not that they were hard to detect at the time.

[31] I would like to thank Gerhard Ernst for inviting me to the very stimulating Erlangen conference where this chapter was first presented, and to the other participants at the conference for their helpful reactions – especially, but by no means only, those named in notes 14, 23, and 26. I also thank an audience at UC Santa Barbara for an excellent discussion of the issues in this chapter, and in particular Sonny Elizondo for prompting an important correction in my formulation of one of these.

CHAPTER 10

Can an Ancient Greek Skeptic Be Eudaimôn *(or Happy)? And What Difference Does the Answer Make to Us?*

I

Aristotle takes it as obvious and generally agreed that *eudaimonia*, usually translated into English by "happiness," is the highest good. Both ordinary people and the elite, he says, identify living well and doing well with being *eudaimôn* (*NE* 1095a18–20, cf. 1097b22–3). And Aristotle himself does not disagree with this assessment, even though he thinks it is unhelpful by itself, seeing that it leaves quite open what it is, more specifically, to live well. To be *eudaimôn*, then, according to Aristotle – and, he claims, according to almost everyone else (1095a17–18) – is simply for one's life to go well, and his task in the *Ethics* is to pin down more precisely what that consists in. The English word "happy" does not precisely correspond to this, although no single English word will do better as a translation. Happiness does not necessarily have to do with living well in general; we can speak of being happy at an instant – the question "Are you happy now?" is perfectly sensible in some contexts. But there is also a prominent usage of the English word "happy" where it does refer to a state in which, at least from one's own perspective, one's life in general is going well; "Are you happy?" can very well mean something like "Is your life working out for you as you would wish?," not "Do you feel content right now?" When I speak of happiness interchangeably with *eudaimonia*, then, I will be using it in this more general sense; in this usage "happiness" is at least a serviceable translation for the Greek word, even if (for reasons we will get to) still not a perfect one. But since it is not perfect, I will also continue to use both the noun *eudaimonia* and the adjective *eudaimôn* on a regular basis.

If *eudaimonia*, per se, refers simply to one's life going well, it may seem unsurprising that all the major ancient Greek skeptics, of both the Academic and the Pyrrhonist traditions, speak of *eudaimonia* as something the skeptic aspires to along with everyone else. For ancient philosophy in

general, unlike much philosophy today, has an essentially practical character; one's philosophy is something that affects the way one lives one's life – or at the very least, must be capable of being incorporated into one's life. Certainly this is how the ancient skeptics conceived it. And so one way for them to recommend their philosophical outlook was to insist that that outlook not only could be incorporated into one's life, but also resulted in one's life going *well* – in other words, in *eudaimonia*.

For the Academics Arcesilaus and Carneades, as reported by Sextus Empiricus, the topic of happiness seems to arise in the context of a response to the familiar *apraxia* objection: how is it even possible to live as a skeptic? In particular, how is it possible for someone who claims to hold no beliefs about the nature of things to make choices between alternative courses of action? Arcesilaus responds, according to Sextus, by saying that the skeptic's choices will be based on what is "reasonable" (*M* 7.158), and that by choosing and acting in this way he will achieve happiness, which is also identified – though Sextus does not explicitly present this as part of what Arcesilaus himself said – as the end (*telos*) of life. And Carneades responds with an elaborate account of a decision procedure based on "persuasive appearances" (*M* 7.166–89); persuasiveness, it is pointed out, comes in different levels, and it is the highest level of persuasiveness that is said to be appropriate for "matters that pertain to happiness" (184). Again it is possible that the reference to happiness is Sextus', not Carneades' own; but there is no particular reason to think so. The details of both Arcesilaus' and Carneades' arguments are complicated and a matter of much debate. There is also a difficult question as to whether they intend these arguments as their own, or whether they are telling their opponents, in a purely dialectical spirit, what *they* ought to think about these issues.[1] But whatever the answers to these questions, it looks as if both these Academics are concerned to show that happiness is just as feasible on skeptical principles as on non-skeptical ones.

The Pyrrhonists go further. Not only are they much more explicit than the Academics that happiness is something skeptics secure for *themselves* (and for anyone else who comes to accept their message). They also consistently portray the Pyrrhonist as *better off* in this respect than everyone else – or at least, than other philosophers; the Pyrrhonists are happy, and philosophers of other persuasions are not. This appears to be the case – although the evidence is fragmentary – even in the earliest phase of

[1] For good recent surveys of these issues, with extensive bibliographies, see Brittain 2005 and Allen 2011.

Pyrrhonism, in the person of Pyrrho himself and his disciple Timon. In the single most important text relating to Pyrrho's philosophy, a summary by the Peripatetic Aristocles of an account by Timon, we are told that "the person who is to be happy" (Aristocles in Eusebius, *Praep. evang.* 14.18.2) must address certain central questions, to which the passage then gives the answers. And several other fragments of Timon emphasize how far other thinkers, those who do not answer these questions in the manner recommended, are from the tranquility (*ataraxia*) that Pyrrho, according to the passage of Aristocles, apparently takes happiness to consist in.[2] The same combination of ideas appears in a rather more focused way in a summary by Photius of a work entitled *Pyrrhonist Discourses* by Aenesidemus, the originator of the later Pyrrhonist tradition (*Bibl.* 169b18–170b35). The Pyrrhonist is happy, we are told (169b27), whereas other thinkers "wear themselves out in vain with ceaseless torments" (169b24); though the character of the Pyrrhonist's happiness is not specified, the contrasting description of the non-Pyrrhonists' state again suggests that it was some form of tranquility. And this is explicit in Sextus Empiricus, the one ancient Greek skeptic of whom we have substantial surviving writings; Sextus not only tells us what the skeptic's happiness is like, but also explains why the skeptic's avoidance of definite beliefs makes him happy, whereas the non-skeptic's adoption of definite beliefs has the opposite effect.

Two chapters at the center of Sextus' *Against the Ethicists* bear the titles "Whether it is possible to live happily if one postulates things good and bad by nature" (110–40) and "Whether the person who suspends judgment about the nature of good and bad things is in all respects happy" (141–67). The chapter titles in Sextus are generally thought to be his own, but in any case these titles accurately capture the chapters' contents. The answer to the first question, unsurprisingly, is "no." The reason is that if, unlike the skeptic, one believes that certain things are by nature good and others by nature bad, that will vastly increase the level of one's anxiety. One will be obsessed about acquiring, or holding on to, the good things, and about ridding oneself, and keeping oneself rid, of the bad things. The skeptic, on the other hand, who lacks any beliefs of the form "X is by nature good/bad," is free from all such turmoil, and hence, as Sextus says, "it is skepticism's achievement to procure the happy life" (140). He

[2] For discussion of this material, and of Pyrrho's practical attitude more generally, see Bett 2000a, chapter 2.

immediately goes on to characterize happiness explicitly as tranquility: "That person is happy who conducts himself without disturbance" (141).

The answer to the second question – and this is perhaps a little more surprising – is also "no." Sextus distinguishes between matters of opinion and matters of necessity. The skeptic lacks all opinions (*doxai*) – and in particular, opinions to the effect that certain things are by nature good or bad – and so, as we just saw, is free from all the associated troubles; as far as these matters are concerned, then, the skeptic is "perfectly happy" (147). But, as he says (143), there are certain things that just happen to us, no matter what we do or do not believe, such as hunger, thirst, or pain; and to these things the skeptic is just as vulnerable as everyone else. Since they do cause disturbance to skeptics as well as to others, it follows that on this score the skeptic is *not* "perfectly happy." But even here, Sextus argues, the skeptic does better than others as far as happiness – that is, *ataraxia* – is concerned. For other people, when in pain, have an additional source of trouble besides the pain itself: they also hold the *opinion* that pain is bad by nature. The skeptic, on the other hand, simply feels the pain. Indeed, Sextus even says that the opinion may be worse than the pain itself; for this reason someone watching a surgery (an ancient surgery, that is, without anesthetic) may actually suffer more than the patient (159).[3] Thus the skeptic's state with regard to these matters of necessity, while admittedly not one of *ataraxia*, is one of "moderate feeling" (161), as opposed to violent disturbance; here too, then, the skeptic's level of happiness is higher than that of the non-skeptic, even if it falls short of full-scale happiness.

Here Sextus is setting himself in opposition (deliberately, I suspect) to both Stoics and Epicureans. The Stoics held that everything except virtue and vice were indifferent; while one's nature inclines one to avoid such things as pain (which usually makes very good sense), their presence or absence does not actually make any difference to one's happiness, because they are not actually bad, and only things that are good or bad affect whether or not one is happy. And the letter Epicurus is said to have written on his deathbed (DL 10.22) suggests that philosophy can in fact mitigate or even prevent the disturbance associated with physical pain; Epicurus says that his tremendous physical sufferings are offset by his memory of

[3] Sextus also suggests, in terms that seem borrowed from the Epicureans, that these kinds of inevitable suffering are not as bad as usually supposed. But this seems irrelevant to the question of whether the skeptic is better off than others; and the same can be said of other arguments employed in this section (150–61). The one I have just described in the main text is at least pertinent, even if not convincing. For discussion, see Bett 1997, 165–72.

past conversations with the addressee Idomeneus. Sextus agrees with the Stoics that pain is not in reality bad, but he does not agree that it makes no difference to one's level of happiness. And he agrees with Epicurus that happiness is a matter of achieving *ataraxia*, but he does not agree that *ataraxia* can be maintained in the face of serious physical suffering. On both counts Sextus can plausibly claim to be more realistic than his opponents.[4] And this realism may be a result of a need felt within the Pyrrhonist tradition to respond to disbelief at the stories of Pyrrho's truly inhuman level of tranquility. Perhaps the most dramatic one again has to do with ancient surgical techniques; Pyrrho is said not even to have frowned when subjected to surgery and cautery (DL 9.67). But despite adopting a position that is, in important respects, less ambitious than those of either the figurehead of Pyrrhonism or the two major non-skeptical schools, he does insist that the skeptic does better than the non-skeptic, in terms of the achievement of happiness, when it comes to pain and other forms of inevitable suffering – in addition, again, to fully achieving it (whereas his opponents do not achieve it at all) when it comes to matters of opinion.

II

The skeptics, then, have quite a lot to say about happiness. They seem to accept the general assumption of ancient Greek philosophy that one measure of a philosophy's success is whether living in accordance with it produces happiness. And they take up the challenge of showing that in this respect the skeptic can do at least as well as others (in the case of the Academics), or even (in the case of the Pyrrhonists) that the skeptic can do better. Only in the case of Sextus are we in a position to see specifically and in detail what the arguments were. But the sources make clear that the other skeptics of both traditions had considered positions on the subject.

But now we come to a striking fact. I have spoken of Sextus' treatment of the skeptic's happiness and the non-skeptic's lack of it in *Against the Ethicists*. But in the other work of Sextus that deals with ethics, and with the question of the skeptic's practical stance – namely, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* – the word *eudaimonia* and cognates never appear in connection with

[4] On the response to Epicurus and on Sextus' greater realism, I am agreeing, respectively, with Nussbaum 1994, 289–90, and Annas 1993, 361.

skepticism itself.[5] In fact, the word appears only in one short passage in which non-skeptical, and specifically Stoic, views are being discussed (*PH* 3.172–5, 177). The same topics as were dealt with in *Against the Ethicists* in association with the concept of happiness come up again in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. Again we have the combination of *ataraxia* in matters of opinion and moderate feeling in matters over which we have no control; again we have the contention that the skeptic is better off in these respects, because belief that things are by nature good or bad brings turmoil; and again we have the example of the onlooker at a surgery fainting because of the belief that what is happening is bad, while the patient maintains his calm (*PH* 3.235–6). *Ataraxia* also comes up in the crucial one-sentence description of skepticism and its effects that occurs near the beginning of the first book: "The skeptical ability," Sextus says, "is one that creates oppositions among things that appear and things that are thought in any way whatever, an ability from which we arrive, because of the equal strength in the opposing objects and accounts, first at suspension of judgment, and after that at tranquility [*ataraxia*]" (1.8). And the same combination of *ataraxia* and moderate feeling figures in the opening chapters of the first book as the skeptic's *telos*, or ultimate aim in life, characterized by Sextus as follows: "We say up to now that the skeptic's *telos* is *ataraxia* in things relating to opinion and moderate feeling in things that are forced on us" (1.25). We also find the same claim that belief in things that are good or bad by nature works against the achievement of this *telos*; "for the person who has the opinion that there is something by nature fine or bad is continually in turmoil" (1.27 – the claim is elaborated in 27–30).

Clearly, then, Sextus has not changed his mind about the general character of a skeptic's life and why it is preferable to a non-skeptic's life. But he now chooses to express this view without any reference to the notion of *eudaimonia*. So it looks as if he now sees something problematic about it, from a skeptic's point of view.[6] What might this be?

[5] This was noticed in Striker 1990. Sextus' third work, on the specialized sciences (*M* 1–6), uses the word *eudaimonia* a few times in the context of whether these sciences contribute to happiness (*M* 1.270, 271, 294, *M* 6.27, 36). In all but one of these cases the reference to happiness is part of a view attributed to others, and the one exception (*M* 1.294) occurs in the context of a reply to an opponent's view. It is therefore not clear, as far as this work is concerned, whether Sextus is willing to use the notion of *eudaimonia* for his own purposes.

[6] My wording assumes that *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* is later than the longer work of which *Against the Ethicists* is part. I have argued for this view in detail in Bett 1997. See also the introductions to Bett 2005 and Bett 2012.

We have seen that the skeptic avoids beliefs of the form "X is by nature good/bad." And this, of course, is just one aspect of a more general avoidance of belief that defines the skeptical attitude. How far this avoidance extends has been the subject of considerable scholarly debate.[7] But it is clear that the skeptic avoids at least all beliefs having to do with the real nature of things. So one way to refine the question just posed is to ask whether there is anything in the notion of *eudaimonia* that commits one to beliefs about the real nature of things. A number of possibilities may spring to mind. Before we get to these, however, it is worth noting that if there is a problem for the skeptics here, it is a problem that may not apply to the Academic skeptics. As we saw, one way to read the Academics' ideas about choice, action, and the attainment of happiness is as a dialectical exercise, exploiting the consequences of their opponents' views, not as a considered position to which they themselves adhered. And if this is right, then they are of course perfectly entitled to use the notion of *eudaimonia*, regardless of any inconsistency it might have with skeptical principles; so long as their opponents employed the notion of *eudaimonia* – which, of course, they did – the Academics, for this purpose, may quite reasonably do the same. In this case it is only the Pyrrhonists, who do attribute *eudaimonia* to themselves, that are potentially in jeopardy.

What, then, are the presuppositions concerning the real nature of things that are built into the concept of *eudaimonia*? First of all, I have been speaking of the skeptic as claiming to be *better off* than other philosophers. Does this commit the skeptic to an impartial ranking of ways of life, which would presuppose some set of objective values independent of the skeptic's own preferences? I think this would be too hasty. "Better off" was my shorthand; it does not correspond to anything in Sextus' actual wording. He is certainly interested in *recommending* the skeptic's outlook over those of other philosophers; and his account of the skeptic's *ataraxia* and moderate feeling, as contrasted with the anguish suffered by others because of their beliefs about good and bad, is certainly one that we, as non-skeptics, might describe as a characterization of the skeptics as better off than the rest. But Sextus himself need not conceive of what he is doing in this way. He might describe himself as simply expressing a set of preferences, without attempting to suggest any objective basis for those preferences. He might say, "I *prefer* the skeptic's combination of *ataraxia* and

[7] Most of the important essays on this subject are collected in Burnyeat and Frede 1997. See also Brennan 1994; Perin 2010b; and, for reviews of the state of the debate, Morison 2014, section 3.4, and Brennan and Roberts 2018, section 4.

moderate feeling to the anguish and obsession of the non-skeptic. And I expect you would too, if you tried it. But that is not to say that the skeptic's attitude is in some objective sense *better* than that of the non-skeptic. If I believed that, I would certainly be a victim of self-refutation, since beliefs about some things being better, in the nature of things, than others are precisely the source of the non-skeptic's trouble. But to express a preference, and to invite someone else to see whether he or she shares it, is not to commit oneself in any way to an objective or impartial ranking."

A similar worry might seem to arise when one considers the usual association, in Greek philosophy, between *eudaimonia* and the *telos*. As I said at the outset, *eudaimonia* at its most general seems to consist in one's life going well, whatever that might amount to. Now, the *telos*, or goal of life, is generally understood as being that toward which one's life should be, or naturally is, aiming; hence the near-identity between the concepts of the *telos* and the highest good, that in terms of which all other things are ultimately judged good or not good. On this kind of picture, for one's life to go well is for one to achieve, or be well on the road to achieving, the *telos*. Hence, to specify what *eudaimonia* amounts to and to specify what the *telos* is seem to amount to the very same thing. Sextus himself does not make this connection in his surviving works. But this is because the work in which he uses the notion of *eudaimonia* does not contain, in its surviving portion, any discussion of the *telos*. However, the longer work to which *Against the Ethicists* belongs did begin with a general account of skepticism, which is now lost.[8] And that lost general account, which would have paralleled the opening book of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, surely included a discussion of the *telos*, as *Outlines* I does; in fact, Sextus in *Against the Ethicists* appears to refer back to this very discussion (*M* 11.167).[9] In any case, the fact that the same combination of *ataraxia* and moderate feeling appears in his surviving discussion of the *telos* as appears in the section of *Against the Ethicists* where he talks about the skeptic's happiness suggests that Sextus would have accepted the usual association between *eudaimonia* and the *telos*. But does not all of this presuppose a structure of value that is somehow built into the nature of things?

Again, I do not think the Pyrrhonist is vulnerable to this objection. Scholars have often seen something inconsistent in Sextus' use of the

[8] On this, see Janácek 1963; Blomqvist 1974.

[9] "But these topics have been spoken of more precisely in the studies on the skeptical end, and it is not necessary 'Once again to relate things clearly said.'" For discussion, see Bett 1997, 180.

concept of the *telos*;[10] and they would presumably see the same inconsistency in his use of the concept of *eudaimonia*. But, while the *telos* is indeed usually thought of as an end that is somehow built into the nature of things – as being what our natures, and perhaps the nature of the world more generally, suit us to strive for, and to flourish if we attain it – there is no need to read Sextus as signing on to these presuppositions. For him the *telos* may very well be simply what he, as a skeptic, happens to see as an ultimate object of preference; it need not be something that he thinks everyone ought to strive for, or that a correct understanding of human nature will show we will all do best to strive for. That Sextus does have in mind this more limited claim is suggested by his use of the typical Pyrrhonist phrase "up to now" in characterizing the *telos* (*PH* 1.25, quoted earlier). So far, he is saying, it seems to us that *ataraxia* and moderate feeling are what it makes most sense for us to strive for. But this is not some matter of fixed, immutable fact, anchored in the nature of things; it is simply a fact about our past or present state of mind. And if the *telos*, in Sextus' hands, does not need to be understood in a way that commits him to an objective order of value, then the usual association between *telos* and *eudaimonia* does not imply that his use of the latter notion would commit him to one either. I spoke of *eudaimonia*, at its most general, as amounting to one's life going well. But this way of speaking, too, can perhaps be recast in terms of people's ultimate preferences, without any commitment to an objective ranking of lives.

So far, then, it is not obvious why Sextus would have found the notion of *eudaimonia* problematic. But this is not the end of the story. For one thing, to say that the general understanding of *eudaimonia* needs to be *recast* for Sextus' use already suggests that it is not naturally suited to a skeptical outlook. To speak of someone's life *going well* sounds, on the surface at least, as if it is appealing to some kind of objective ranking – at any rate, to something independent of the person's actual current preferences. Now this point by itself may not carry much weight. But, more importantly, the way in which the term *eudaimonia* is actually used makes it hard to avoid that implication of objectivity. For when Greek philosophers speak of *eudaimonia*, they tend to be interested in the question of what, in general, *eudaimonia* consists in; the issue is *what it is for a human being* to be *eudaimôn*, and the answer is one that is supposed to apply to everyone. To say what *eudaimonia* is, then, is not the same as speaking of some individual person's life as going well; it amounts to saying quite

[10] On this question, see Moller 2004; Grgic 2006.

generally what is required for a human life to go well. And *this* is not readily understood in terms of anyone's actual current preferences. At the very least, it presupposes some general account of what it takes for the preferences of human beings as such to be satisfied; in other words, it presupposes a certain definite conception of human nature. But very probably, it also presupposes a certain definite ethical position, according to which some states of affairs are better for us than others – a position that, as Sextus puts it, holds some things to be by nature good and others by nature bad.

So although the notion of *eudaimonia* itself is, as Julia Annas has put it, a "thin and unspecific" one,[11] to use it in the way that Greek philosophers typically use it is to venture into territory where a skeptic, who by definition avoids beliefs about how things are by nature, does not belong. And Sextus, as we have seen, does use it in this typical way in *Against the Ethicists*: he tells us that "That person is happy who conducts himself without disturbance and . . . is in a state of peace and calm" (*M* 11.141). Like Aristotle or the Stoics, he is here issuing a general statement about what it is for a human life to go well. It is a statement that is not uncontroversial; while some, notably the Epicureans, agree that *ataraxia* is the key to happiness, others do not. But even if it was uncontroversial, it is still a statement that requires justification; and it is hard to see how the justification could proceed other than in terms of a theory of human nature and, most probably, a theory of what is genuinely good and bad. The notion of *eudaimonia*, then, has a particular role in Greek ethics that ties it to certain kinds of theorizing. Hence, despite the apparently innocuous character that it seemed to have at the beginning, it is a notion that a skeptic would be ill advised to adopt. So there is, after all, good reason for Sextus to avoid it as he does in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, and there is indeed a threat to skeptical consistency when he uses it in *Against the Ethicists*. One can speak of *ataraxia* as what the skeptic aims for, and in this context one can even use the word *telos*, "end" – which is normally loaded with similar theoretical baggage – without venturing beyond a strictly skeptical outlook. But if one offers this state aimed for by the skeptic as a specification of *eudaimonia*, one is no longer a true skeptic.

There is another, related reason why a skeptic might be ill advised to adopt the notion of *eudaimonia* for his own use. This can be seen by looking at the attitude expressed toward it by the Cyrenaics, a school in some ways akin to skepticism, but which Sextus (*PH* 1.215) emphasizes is

[11] Annas 1993, 426.

different from skepticism as he understands it (as he does with numerous other philosophers and schools with which skepticism might be confused). The Cyrenaics are said to have denied that *eudaimonia* is the *telos*. According to Diogenes Laertius' summary of their views, "It seems to them that the end is different from happiness. For the end is particular pleasure, while happiness is the whole compounded of particular pleasures, in which both past and future pleasures are counted together. And particular pleasure is worth choosing for its own sake, whereas happiness is worth choosing not for its own sake, but for the sake of the particular pleasures" (2.87–8, cf. Athenaeus, 544a–b). Along similar lines, one particular sub-group of Cyrenaics, the followers of Anniceris, are said to have denied that there is a *telos* for the whole of life at all, instead claiming that each action has as its own end the pleasure that results from it (Clement, *Strom*. 2.21.130, 7–8). What these passages seem to suggest is that *eudaimonia* is something that, by its very nature, applies to the long term, perhaps even to one's life as a whole. The Cyrenaics prefer not to concentrate their attention on the long term, but on immediate particular pleasures; and for this reason *eudaimonia* is not what they pursue as the *telos*. There is room for disagreement about how radically the Cyrenaics depart from standard assumptions of Greek ethics, including its broadly "eudaimonist" framework; *eudaimonia* is, after all, mentioned in the Diogenes passage as something worth choosing, albeit not directly.[12] But the clear implication of these texts is that a concern for *eudaimonia* – a concern about which the Cyrenaics are expressing at least some degree of reservation – is a concern for one's long-term well-being rather than with the immediate present. Indeed, this should not be surprising in light of the point with which we began: that *eudaimonia*, according to the common understanding, amounts to one's life in general going well. In addition, the notion in the Diogenes passage of a "whole compounded of" particular pleasures may suggest that one's life must be *structured* (in some unspecified manner) if it is to qualify as going well; the word *sustêma*, which I have translated as "whole compounded," often (though not always) has the connotation of an *ordered* whole – a system, in fact – not just a random collection.

But if the Cyrenaics are wary of the notion of *eudaimonia*, it seems clear that the skeptics should be as well – albeit for somewhat different reasons. The Cyrenaics' wariness may derive from doubts about our ability to plan for the long term, or perhaps, more radically, from a lack of concern about

[12] For partially opposed positions on this, see O'Keefe 2002; Tsouna-McKirahan 2002.

any time other than the present.[13] For the skeptics, on the other hand, the idea that what humans ought to do is develop a properly structured life over the long term would surely be another piece of theoretical baggage, one from which they would have good reason to distance themselves. Indeed, the Pyrrhonists' stock phrase "up to now" indicates precisely the opposite of a concern for long-term structure in one's life; Pyrrhonists act according to how things have struck them so far, without assuming that things will continue in an orderly way as before. (Such an assumption would, after all, amount to a definite position.) And so, to the extent that a concern for the long term and for a structure to one's life are built into the very concept of *eudaimonia* – as the Cyrenaics' suspicion of it seems to suggest, and as is consistent with the tenor of much other Greek ethics[14] – the skeptics might very well wish to avoid it; for them, unlike the Cyrenaics, the problem is not that it incorporates *mistaken* theoretical assumptions, but that it incorporates theoretical assumptions at all.

Let us return to my original question: can an ancient Greek skeptic be *eudaimôn*? The answer, I think, is not entirely straightforward. It is not impossible that a skeptic (not, of course, through any deliberate choice) might happen to live the kind of life that, according to some *other* school's account of *eudaimonia*, would qualify as *eudaimôn*. This is in fact not going to happen in most cases, given that such specifications of *eudaimonia* will usually include a component of definite belief that would be anathema to a skeptic. This is clearly true of the Stoic specification, and presumably of the Aristotelian one. But perhaps the skeptic – assuming he did indeed achieve *ataraxia* – might qualify as *eudaimôn* as conceived by an Epicurean, albeit via a different route from the one laid down by the Epicureans themselves. For the Epicureans aimed at pleasure, and understood this to consist in *ataraxia*; and while the Epicureans, unlike the Pyrrhonists, took the route to *ataraxia* to involve the adoption of certain beliefs about the world, it is not clear that they saw the state of *ataraxia* as itself incorporating any element of belief. What a skeptic would be advised not to do, if I am right, is himself lay claim to the achievement of *eudaimonia*, and

[13] For some considerations in favor of this more radical interpretation, see the final section of O'Keefe 2002.

[14] The best-known example of this tendency is of course Aristotle's phrase "in a complete life" (*NE* 1098a18) appended to his characterization of the human good. Unless Aristotle changes his mind, he cannot literally mean an entire lifetime; for he later admits that someone might be happy at one time and then lose his happiness, and even possibly – though this would be very difficult – regain it later (1101a9–13). But as his explanatory remarks make clear, a "complete life" is at least a substantial period of time.

include it as a component of the skeptical outlook in a role parallel to the one it occupies in other philosophies; for, as we have seen, the very concept seems to bring with it a number of theoretical presuppositions that one would expect a skeptic to want to avoid. And this, I suspect, is why Sextus decided not to use it in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, even though he had done so in *Against the Ethicists*.

III

If a skeptic cannot claim to be *eudaimôn* (even if he might conceivably be so by someone else's lights), can he claim to be *happy*? In other words, do modern notions of happiness have the same kinds of theoretical presuppositions that we have noted in the Greek term *eudaimonia*? Not entirely, at any rate. As I noted at the outset, the English sentence "Are you happy?" (and I believe this is replicated at least to some extent in other modern languages) can sometimes be asking simply for a sounding of one's current state of feeling; and there is no problem in a skeptic giving a definite answer – which will sometimes be a positive answer – to this. However, as we saw, "Are you happy?" can also be used to ask whether a person considers his or her life in general to be going well. Here, I think, the skeptic's ability to answer the question (in the affirmative, or at all) is not so obvious. And here there is a possible lesson for us today.[15]

To return to something suggested earlier, the very idea of someone's life going well assumes an ability to rank lives on some scale of success. Presumably, on any account, this ranking must be somehow related to actual human needs, interests, and preferences. And for the many people today, both in and out of philosophy, who reject any kind of objective values – which are perhaps a kind of modern analogue of the idea from which Sextus distances himself, the idea of things being good or bad by nature – the notion of a person's life going well will clearly have to be construed in terms of the degree of satisfaction of some such set of needs, interests, and preferences (whether these are understood as specific to that

[15] The reflections that follow are very superficial, and are merely intended to point to some implications that the preceding discussion may have beyond the scholarly field of Greek philosophy. In particular, I take virtually no account of the considerable contemporary literature on the subject of happiness, well-being, etc. A flourishing series of debates on these topics can be found in the interdisciplinary *Journal of Happiness Studies* (available both in print and online). But – call me perverse if you like – one of my favorite contributions in this area (with references to many other contributions up to that point) is Benatar 2006; on the specific topic I am addressing here, see especially 69–88 ("Three Views about the Quality of Life and Why Life Goes Badly on All of Them").

individual, common to all humanity, or something in between). But to pin down, in these terms, what it would be for someone's life to be going well is not easy. We might perhaps want to say that there is no *one* scale of success – that what counts as life going well for me might be different from what counts as life going well for you. But this seems to introduce the danger that what it is for a life to be going well may be reduced simply to the state of well-being experienced (perhaps over some extended stretch of time) by the person in question.

Some might say that this is, indeed, all that a life going well can amount to. But many people, including many who are suspicious of any notion of objective values, would be uncomfortable with this. And one reason is that it seems all too clear that there are cases where people are *wrong* about whether their lives are going well. People can report a high level of well-being (and their reports need not be due to self-deception) even though we may judge them to be missing in some crucial component of well-being, such as freedom or dignity. And we may be reluctant to ascribe this simply to a different *perspective* on what is really important in life; such people, we may want to say, do not simply have a different outlook, but a mistaken one, caused perhaps by oppression or a perverse ideology in their societies.[16] But to think that there is a mistake, we surely need to have some view about what *in general* it takes for a life to go well, regardless of people's subjective reports.

Yet, to repeat, getting such a view into focus seems a formidable task. Kant famously held the view that the content of happiness is quite indeterminate. For him, happiness does seem to be relative to individual interests. But given all the uncertainties in the world, he thinks, it is impossible for anyone to tell what will in fact produce happiness even in his or her own case.[17] Nicholas White, in his book *A Brief History of Happiness*, goes further. For White, it is more than a matter of mere uncertainty: "even if we knew all the repercussions" of pursuing various different aims, he says, "we don't have a determinate way of evaluating the various possible combinations." White concludes his book by saying that "we never have or try for a *completely and consistently articulated* concept of

[16] The extensive current literature on adaptive preferences is relevant here; two recent examples (with differing perspectives) are Dorsey 2017 and Terlazzo 2017. On another note, one can also imagine someone reporting dissatisfaction with his or her life, even though we might see it as containing all that one could hope for. But here we may be less inclined to say that the person's life *is* really going well even though he or she thinks otherwise, because we may see psychic integration, or a positive outlook on one's situation, as itself one component of a life that is going well.

[17] See, e.g., Kant 1981, 418–19 (in the original pagination).

happiness," and that "in an important sense the history of the concept of happiness has been a search for something that's unobtainable."[18] Unobtainable not because life is a tragedy, but because it is a confused mess; we just do not have a clear enough idea of what we are looking for.

The World Database of Happiness has for decades been collecting information on people's answers to questions purporting to elicit their level of happiness; nations are ranked overall in terms of happiness, as well as in terms of the degree of inequality of the happiness within them; trends are identified over time; and so on.[19] But it seems fair to ask whether there is any single clear commodity being measured. The questions asked are quite varied, but they usually seem to involve one's placing oneself on a scale; the scales generally have to do either with how one feels (at the moment or over time) or with how well one thinks one's life is going. But scales of the first kind seem to invite the question "Compared with what?" How one thinks one is feeling, as measured on a scale of one to ten, must depend in part on how one thinks a person *ought* to feel, or is *entitled* to feel, or might realistically *aspire* to feel; it is a commonplace observation that some people are "glass-half-full" and others "glass-half-empty" types of people, and people in the first category might well place themselves higher on the scale than people in the second category, even if their current states of feeling were actually identical. And scales of the second kind must depend in part on some general conception of what it *means* for a life to be going well. It seems highly unlikely that everyone's views on this issue, either, will be the same. It also seems very possible that different national cultures will affect people's views on both issues – so that the answers elicited to the questions in any one nation may be systematically skewed in one direction or another.[20] In addition, it seems highly unlikely that most people's views about how a person may reasonably expect to feel, or about what it means for a life to go well, are well articulated or precise. Indeed, if White is right, they may be exceedingly fuzzy. All this casts some doubt on *what* the World Database of Happiness is a database of. Yet to give the answers that the database collects does seem to require that a person have *some* conception of what, in general, a well-lived life is. And so, in answering the questions one is not simply registering states of feeling,

[18] White 2006; the quoted passages are on pages 169, 173. See also Chekola 2007.
[19] Veenhoven 2018.
[20] Much data, amusingly conveyed, that may seem to support this suspicion can be found in Weiner 2008. Weiner does not, however, seem to notice any of these deeper issues more than intermittently.

but also, implicitly at least, giving voice to values that make some claim to being more than mere expressions of individual preference.

John Rawls emphasized that the liberal structure of society for which he argued did not impose any one conception of well-being on its citizens, but left them to shape their lives in light of their own conceptions of what a good life would be – provided these conceptions did not interfere with the ability of others to pursue their own conceptions.[21] One problem he faced, and that many contemporary societies face, is that some people's conceptions of the good life have an absolutist quality that requires their adherents to try to impose them on others. But even for those of whom this is not true – those who are willing to "live and let live" – the very notion of "the good life" has about it an air of aspiring to universal status; and so there is at least a natural tendency to think of the good life, however one conceives it, as a life that people in general would do best to pursue (if only they had the sense to see it), not merely as a life that one individually happens to prefer.[22] And this is so, I suggest, even if at a more reflective level one may have doubts about the existence of values that are not reducible to some preferences or other.

What does all this have to do with the skeptics? I asked whether a skeptic could claim to be happy, in the sense of asserting that his life was going well. If, as I have been suggesting, making such an assertion presupposes that one has some general conception, however incompletely specified, of what it is for a life to go well, then the answer must surely be no; for this would be a theoretical commitment, and theoretical

[21] Rawls' classic work is, of course, Rawls 1971. But the theme to which I refer is much more prominent in the later Rawls 1993.

[22] As Richard Kraut has pointed out, Rawls himself conceives of the good as relative to the agent's plans and desires; see Rawls 1971, 27, and Kraut 2006, 192–3. My point is simply that this is not how many people think from the inside about their own conception of the good; for them, it feels like (and feels as if it *ought* to be) something more than a mere set of private plans and desires. Kraut's main aim is to show that Aristotle does not recognize a category of moral rightness, independent of the question of what things are good. His purpose in introducing Rawls is that for Rawls, by contrast, a separate category of rightness is crucial, precisely because Rawls conceives of the good as too subjective in character to serve as the foundation for a theory of justice. Aristotle, unlike, Rawls, has no trouble thinking of justice as a good because he does *not* think of goodness as relative to individual desires or purposes; hence it does not occur to him to seek an altogether different type of value, besides the good, on which to base a theory of justice, or of any other ethically significant characteristic. Now, if I am right about the phenomenology, the division Kraut detects between the modern moral consciousness (which he takes Rawls to be faithfully reflecting) and the outlook of Aristotle may not be quite as great as he supposes. But the difficulties I have been emphasizing throughout this section – that is, our contemporary difficulties in specifying what well-being consists in – still leave a substantial gulf, one that favors the general tenor of Kraut's argument. The article is an excellent study of a major divide between Aristotelian and modern ethics; on Aristotle versus Rawls, see especially sections 13–15.

commitments are what the skeptic avoids. And if this is correct, then the gap between happiness, in this sense, and *eudaimonia* is not as great as one might have expected. Greek ethical theory offers views about what *eudaimonia* consists in; and in doing so, it specifies what the good human life in general is like. We do not tend to issue general statements of the form "happiness is ...." But in assessing whether someone (perhaps ourselves, perhaps someone else) is happy, we do seem to assume that some such general statements are in principle available. The difference is that, at least if we are not among those absolutists mentioned in the previous paragraph, we are much less likely to be able to produce such statements on demand. This is not just because, as we saw earlier, the notion of *eudaimonia*, at least in some ancient Greek theorists' hands, seemed to incorporate from the start certain structural constraints. The main point is just that we are a lot vaguer about what adds up to a well-lived life.

Perhaps we should simply give up on the idea that there is any general, non-subjective answer to the question what it is for a life to go well. I have spoken of this idea as something that seems to be implicit in our ways of thinking about such a life. But the idea itself may be a relic of habits of thought that no longer resonate with a contemporary outlook; it is at least tempting to conclude this, given the difficulty in specifying what a well-lived life would amount to. But here is where the example of Greek skepticism may be relevant to our own concerns. The pure, consistent skepticism of Sextus in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* – the skepticism that does without the concept of *eudaimonia* – offers some sense of what it would be like to give up on that idea. As we saw, what Sextus ends up saying is something like this: "We Pyrrhonists like the combination of *ataraxia* and moderate feeling that I have described. At least, we like it so far (who knows whether we may change our minds?). But of course we would not be so rash as to suggest that this is *what it is*, in general, for a human being to live well; that would be committing ourselves to far too much. No, this is just what we happen to prefer. Try it, if you like; we suspect you might like it too. But if not, never mind; it is not as if anything really important turns on the matter." Is this kind of attitude one that we would be comfortable with? I suspect that for most of us, even if we have suspicions about the status of ethical values, the answer would be no; that degree of detachment seems both unattainable and unwelcome. But if so, then it follows that we cannot easily abandon the general notion of a life that is going well – however disappointed we may be in the project of saying what that amounts to, and however much it may seem to commit us to values of a kind of whose existence many of us are unsure.

Another thing that may be unwelcome about the Pyrrhonist position is that what it recommends is simply a psychological state of contentment. Most of us want something more robust out of life than that, and would consider a life of which that is the highlight to be peculiarly impoverished. Of course, the Pyrrhonists were not the only ones to favor *ataraxia*; the Epicureans did so as well, and in their case the choice had a considerable theoretical basis. But I think it is fair to say that the recommendation of such a psychological state fits particularly well with an outlook that eschews theory; more ambitious recommendations are liable to invite the question "Why should I bother?," and the answer will get one into the business of justification, which will tend to lead to definite intellectual commitments. Now, this brings me to a final set of ancient/modern comparisons, and perhaps to another angle on the problem we have just been considering.

If we consider who, in modern times, has offered a definite theory of what happiness consists in, an obvious answer that springs to mind is the British utilitarians. For Bentham and Mill, happiness consists in pleasure, and the way one should act, on any given occasion, is the way that will bring about the most happiness, so understood – not merely for oneself, but for people in general.[23] Sextus would have had at least two reasons for holding this view in suspicion. First, he would not accept pleasure as the goal of life; this is part of his basis for distancing himself from the Cyrenaics (*PH* 1.215). And second, the idea that one ought to maximize the amount of pleasure *in the world*, as opposed to simply cultivating it oneself, is one that would have struck him as in need of justification; in this latter respect, he is not so different from some modern critics of utilitarianism.

One modern thinker who had something to say about both the utilitarians and the Greek skeptics is Friedrich Nietzsche. And in view of these evident differences between them, it is striking that Nietzsche is critical of both groups, and for somewhat similar reasons. Nietzsche sees the pursuit of tranquility as a sign of a decadent, weary human type, and he associates both the utilitarians and the skeptics with this tendency. Nietzsche's relation to the Greek skeptics is in fact much more complicated and ambivalent than this;[24] but his scorn for their ideal of *ataraxia* is at least one significant strand in his reaction to them. Ironically, Nietzsche uses the word "happiness" (*Glück*) to refer to this and related ideals (although he

[23] For basic materials from both authors, see Ryan 1987; Warnock 2003.
[24] I have discussed this in Bett 2000b.

uses it in other, very different ways as well); and his attitude is well summed up in a remark about the English – but with the English utilitarians particularly in mind: "Humanity does *not* strive for happiness; only the English do" (*Twilight of the Idols*, Epigrams and Arrows, 12).[25] But in fact it is not only the English whom he accuses of this boring and decadent goal. It is also, as I mentioned, the Greek skeptics, and in fact Greek philosophers in general since Socrates, despite other important differences he is prepared to recognize between them; Socrates, in his view, was responsible for a number of wrong turns in Greek philosophy, and the privileging of happiness (in the sense just referred to) was one of them. The most famous place in which this theme appears is perhaps "The Problem of Socrates," the first major section of *Twilight of the Idols*. But an unpublished note puts the view into sharper focus; here the Presocratic philosophers are characterized as "great statesmen," and Nietzsche immediately adds, "With them one does not have the loathsome pretension to happiness, as one does from Socrates on" (*KSA* 8.102). And that the skeptics are included in this assessment is clear from another unpublished note: "Ancient philosophy from Socrates on has the stigmata of decadence: moralizing and happiness. High point Pyrrho" (*KSA* 13.265).[26]

So Nietzsche would have had little sympathy for my contention a moment ago that it is those who avoid theory who are especially likely to be interested in cultivating an attitude of contentment. With a very broad brush he criticizes both skepticism and numerous theory-laden philosophies, both ancient and modern, for treating precisely this kind of attitude as an ideal. Now it is also true, of course, that Nietzsche himself is deeply suspicious of philosophical theorizing; and this is part of why, in other respects, he finds the Greek skeptics much more congenial. But this in turn, as has been widely recognized, gives a peculiar status to his own ideal of life. For Nietzsche, a life that is going well is one in which risks are taken, strength of some kind is exerted, and something admirable is achieved – quite the opposite of the skeptics' *ataraxia*. He is not trying to supply any *single* formula for a well-lived life – artists, politicians, or explorers, of various different types, might all succeed equally well in his eyes – but he is not at all averse to ranking human beings, and these broad constraints are among the means he uses to do so. And yet, given his

[25] I use the translation from Nietzsche 1997. I have discussed Nietzsche's various conceptions of happiness, his view of its place in Greek philosophy, and the relation between this and his attitude to the utilitarians in Bett 2008.

[26] Citations from *KSA* are by volume and page number. Translations of these unpublished passages are my own.

critiques of philosophical theory, he is not so far from the skeptics when the question of justification arises; he can and does elaborate on his particular vision, but in the end, like the skeptics, he is quite willing to admit that this is *his vision*, not an account built on some more neutral foundation.[27] Nietzsche's vision, unlike that of the skeptics, is not likely to strike us as impoverished – whether or not we find it ultimately congenial. But precisely because it is so much fuller and more vibrant than theirs, it perhaps puts into even starker focus the same question posed by theirs: can visions that are avowedly *just visions* of their proponents address the kinds of concerns that seem to surround the issue of what it is for a life to go well? Many of us may have the sense that this is not enough, for reasons that I have tried to convey. Now that, of course, is only to open a discussion, not to close it. But I hope I have at least made plausible the idea that reflection on the ancient Greek skeptics would make a worthwhile contribution to that discussion.

[27] See especially *Beyond Good and Evil* 22, "Supposing that this also [i.e., a set of views that he has just put forward] is only interpretation – and you will be eager enough to make this objection? – well, so much the better." I use the translation from Nietzsche 1966.

CHAPTER 11

On Pyrrhonism, Stances, and Believing What You Want

My topic is a certain kind of voluntarism and its relation to ancient skepticism. Specifically, I am interested in an epistemological voluntarism[1] discussed in a series of papers by Anjan Chakravartty.[2] In these papers Chakravartty, following Van Fraassen,[3] is especially interested in voluntarism about *stances*. He defines a stance as "a strategy, or a combination of strategies, for generating factual beliefs,"[4] and takes empiricism and the metaphysical attitude – understood as especially involving a willingness to speculate about unobservables – as central examples of such epistemic policies as regards the sciences, with scientific realism being understood as a species of the latter. Voluntarism about stances – also referred to in these papers as "stance relativism" – is then the idea that which stance you adopt is, in a deep sense, up to you; assuming that all the options at least meet some minimal standards of rationality, such as avoiding internal inconsistency or incoherence, there are no rationally compelling grounds for adopting one or rejecting another. However, we can also speak of voluntarism at the level of individual beliefs: this would be the view that (in certain circumstances, which would need to be clearly specified) different, strictly incompatible beliefs regarding matters of fact may be rationally permissible choices for different agents.[5]

I would like to explore the relation of Pyrrhonist skepticism – or, more specifically, the surviving works of Sextus Empiricus – to voluntarism at both of these levels: voluntarism about stances and voluntarism about

[1] I must admit that, before being invited to participate in the workshop that was the starting-point for this chapter, I had not encountered the term "voluntarism" in epistemology; I had associated it, rather, with certain positions in ethics and philosophy of religion. See, for example, Schneewind 1996.

[2] Chakravartty 2004; Chakravartty 2011; Chakravartty 2017.

[3] See especially Van Fraassen 2002; the first of the essays cited in the previous note is a review article on this book.

[4] Chakravartty 2004, 175.

[5] I borrow this wording from personal correspondence with Anjan Chakravartty.

individual beliefs. My discussion will divide into two somewhat separate parts. In the first, I further consider the question of stances, and more specifically, I address the extent to which reflection about stances occurs in Sextus and in ancient philosophy generally. In the second, I examine what Pyrrhonism and voluntarism have to do with one another, focusing mainly on the case of voluntarism about individual beliefs, but with the understanding that the outcome of this examination would be expected to apply to the case of voluntarism about stances as well.

I

It looks as if the original Pyrrhonist, Pyrrho himself, had no interest in the sciences; his disciple Timon appears to praise him for being serenely unconcerned with such things (Diogenes Laertius 9.64–5). But Timon himself is credited with a work *Against the Physicists* (*M* 3.2), and as far as we can tell, the rest of the Pyrrhonist tradition follows him. In Sextus' case we have two books *Against the Physicists* and a much shorter version of related material in book 3 of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. Now, it is fair to say that Sextus' focus in these books is not on questions that we would classify as philosophy of science. He says something about his aims and approach at the outset of *Against the Physicists* (*M* 9.1–12), and his goal seems to be to undermine – or, more precisely, put into "impasse" (*aporia*)[6] – the basic principles of the subject, that is, the fundamental entities or processes with which "physics" – meaning, the study of nature quite generally – deals. The physical portion of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* is a little more nuanced, in that it distinguishes between principles and objects of investigation other than principles (*PH* 3.1, 55). But the discussion still centers around very general topics within science, such as the nature of causes, motion, place or time, and whether there are really any such things. What it does not focus on are methodological questions about how science should proceed and how it can be expected to yield truth.

But this does not mean that Sextus says nothing at all that might bear on such questions; we have simply been looking in the wrong place. In the Hellenistic context methodological questions, and epistemology in general, come under logic. Sextus has two books *Against the Logicians* and a corresponding logical portion of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, and here there is extensive discussion of views about the "criterion of truth" – that is, the standards or methods that can or should be used to settle what is true – as

[6] Except where otherwise indicated, translations of Greek words, phrases, and sentences are my own.

well as more specific topics such as the nature and possibility of "signs" – that is, evidence that can allow us to infer from the observed to the unobserved. Sextus' treatment of the criterion of truth in *Against the Logicians* includes both a lengthy historical section where previous positions on the subject are summarized (*M* 7.46–260) and a series of arguments designed to bring about impasse or suspension of judgment (*epochê*) on the question of whether there can be any such thing (*M* 7.261–445). In both places we are presented with a range of views about the best way (or the only way) to get at the truth about things: the main options are the senses, reason, or some combination of the two. And this is no surprise, since quite independently of Sextus' evidence, views on this subject can be found in Greek philosophy at least as far back as Parmenides, with both Plato and Aristotle as prominent representatives.

Now, do views on the criterion of truth and related issues qualify as epistemic stances? These are certainly closer to the issue of stances than anything one will find in Sextus' physical works. But I think we are still some distance from the kind of thing that Chakravartty is talking about. I have just mentioned a series of views about the faculty or combination of faculties that can be expected to get you to the truth, and these may seem to fit Chakravartty's initial account of what a stance is: "a strategy . . . for generating factual beliefs." Yet the actual examples that he gives of stances, such as scientific realism versus empiricism, seem to be of a very different character from what I have just been discussing. Here it is not so much a question of the *means* of getting to the truth – say, via the senses, reason, or a combination – as it is a question of how to *conceive* the truths that one should be looking for. If one is a realist, one will think of the scientist as trying to discover the real nature of unobservable entities, and if one is an empiricist of Van Fraassen's stripe, one will confine oneself to observables; these are different "ways of getting at the truth" in the sense of different pictures of what scientific truths are like, or different types of truths one is prepared to countenance. And if this is the kind of thing one means by "stance," then theories about the criterion of truth, though not unrelated to the kind of questions one would have to consider in deciding on a stance, are not themselves instances of stances. Moreover, if this is what a stance is, then I think the possibility of alternative stances in ancient Greek philosophy is quite limited. Explaining why this is so will be a somewhat complicated task, which will occupy the remainder of this section.

The term "empiricist" originated as the name of a school of thinking about medicine, a school to which Sextus Empiricus actually belonged

(hence his title), as did other Pyrrhonists.[7] True to the root of the term in the Greek word *empeiria*, "experience," the Empiricists claimed to have developed their medical techniques solely on the basis of experience. If a certain procedure for setting a broken bone has been found to be effective in many different cases, then absent any special circumstances, one will expect it to be effective in the next case too, and act accordingly; likewise with cures for fever, headaches, stomach ailments, and so on. Relying on one's own experience and on other doctors' reports of their experience (to the extent that one thinks one can trust them), as well as resorting, in cases where there is no direct prior experience, to the best analogies one can find in this repertoire of experience – what they call "transition to the similar" (*hê tou homoiou metabasis*)[8] – one has at one's disposal a whole array of routines that can be applied to a whole range of ailments. And that is *all* that medicine, properly practiced, is. An excellent introduction to medical Empiricism, along with some alternatives, can be found in the Hackett volume of Galen entitled *Three Treatises on the Nature of Science*.[9]

What is empiricism, so understood, to be contrasted with? The main alternative is what Galen calls Rationalism (or sometimes Dogmatism) (*Sect. Int*. pp. 1–2 Helmreich). Rationalism was not a name that any group of medical thinkers used of themselves, but is simply a label for the many varieties of thought that, in opposition to Empiricism, allowed a role in medicine for reason above and beyond that of experience.[10] In practice what this means is that one does not simply accumulate a series of routines that have been observed to work; one also engages in theorizing about *why*

[7] Diogenes Laertius refers to Sextus as "Sextus the Empiricist" (9.116); in the same passage he names two other little-known Pyrrhonists as Empiricists as well. Strangely, in the one place where Sextus actually discusses the relation between empiricism and Pyrrhonist skepticism, he suggests that another medical school, the Methodic school, has more in common with skepticism than does empiricism (*PH* 1.236–41). However, it is at least possible to read him as distancing the skeptics from a particular version of empiricism rather than from the whole school. For good recent attempts to make sense of this, see Giovacchini 2008; Allen 2010. I say a little more about the Methodic school later (cf. notes 12 and 21).

[8] E.g., Galen, *Sect. Int.* pp. 3–4 Helmreich; I borrow the translation in Frede 1985.

[9] Frede 1985. The three treatises are *On the Sects for Beginners* (cited in this chapter with the Latin abbreviation *Sect. Int.*), *An Outline of Empiricism*, and *On Medical Experience*. The second of these survives only in a medieval Latin translation and the third (except for two fragments in the original Greek) only in an Arabic translation of a Syriac translation; for this and other reasons, the first treatise, along with Frede's introduction, are the most accessible portions of the book.

[10] Among other things, Rationalisms may differ considerably in the level or extent of their commitment to the power of reason to discover underlying truths. This makes the contrast between Rationalism and Empiricism less rigid or stark than I have made it sound in the main text. For a good illustration of this point, see what was almost certainly Michael Frede's last published paper, Frede 2011. However, I do not think this complication affects the points that I wish to make here about stances and attitudes to science.

they work. And this takes the Rationalist into the realm of the underlying nature of the human body, including perhaps some more general questions in physics, all of which the Empiricists entirely avoided. For the Rationalist the question is what is really going on in the patient, such that he or she has a certain set of symptoms, whereas for the Empiricist the only question is what cures, in his repertoire of experience, are correlated with these symptoms. In fact, it is only the Rationalist, not the Empiricist, who thinks of *symptoms* in our usual sense of the term – that is, signs of something *else* going on in the patient, such as a disease, which operates fundamentally at a level that, in the ancient world at least, was unobservable, and which is responsible for those symptoms. For the Empiricists, "symptoms" were merely a cluster of observed ailments; their interest was not in what caused them but only in how they could be alleviated.

Now, how should one characterize the dispute between these two approaches, using the terms that were introduced earlier? It seems fair to say that the Rationalists are scientific realists; they assume that it is legitimate to think in terms of underlying unobservable entities, and they think they can construct reliable inferences from the observable phenomena to the nature of these underlying things. But now, are the ancient Empiricist doctors empiricists in any normal contemporary sense? Or more specifically, do they adopt an empiricist *stance* about how to go about seeking scientific truth? Do they develop theories that in some way eschew speculation about the unobservable?

It seems to me that the answer is no, and that is because they do not develop *theories* at all. Or, to put it another way, they are not in the business of seeking scientific truth – at least if we assume science to be concerned, at minimum, with some form of explanation or understanding (however that may be conceived). They do, of course, claim to have amassed a certain body of truths. But these are solely truths about which treatments have been observed to be successful for which medical conditions, with no attempt at explaining how or why these treatments work. They do not involve themselves in theorizing even for the purely instrumental purpose of achieving better practice; they just follow past practice – or rather, those past practices that have turned out to be effective. Thus they do not have a different view from the Rationalists about how to do science; the disagreement is rather about *whether* to do science. The Empiricists have decided to be nothing more than practitioners, and to abandon science as both hopeless and useless to medical practice. Indeed, to judge from Galen's description in chapter 5 of *On the Sects for Beginners*, it looks as if their conception of what it *would* be like to discover the truth

about the world, or more particularly about the nature of diseases, is the same as the Rationalists': it would be to grasp the nature of various unobservables. The problem is just that this cannot be done; there are multiple conflicting theories of the natures of these things, and no way to adjudicate this dispute. The Empiricists do not "grant that anatomy makes any discoveries or that it would be necessary for the art [i.e., the practice of medicine], even if it did" (*Sect. Int.* p. 10 Helmreich).[11] They do not, then, study the scientific subject of anatomy, and they consider the Rationalists, who do study it, to be wasting their time. And the reason must be that they share with the Rationalists a conception of anatomy as an attempt to discover (via dissection) the hidden workings of the body. For immediately after, in explanation of this rejection of anatomy, we are told that they do not "grant that there is such a thing as a sign of something which by its very nature is nonmanifest" (*Sect. Int.* p. 10 Helmreich); and the chapter concludes in a similar vein by saying that "they point out that it is the disagreement concerning matters which are not manifest which cannot be settled" (*Sect. Int.* p. 12 Helmreich). But it turns out, of course, that this is not a problem after all, because, as suggested by the first of these quoted passages, actual medical practice, according to them, does not depend on these imponderable matters.[12]

[11] In this and the following two quotations I follow the translation of Frede 1985, though the parenthetical explanation in this case is my own.

[12] I have omitted any mention of the third medical school discussed by Galen, the Methodic school, which complicates the picture in certain ways. Like the Empiricists, the Methodists avoid any appeal in their treatments to the underlying nature of things, basing them solely on what is apparent (Galen, *Sect. Int.* chapter 6). They also reject anatomy, seemingly on the same kind of basis as the Empiricists do (Galen, *MM* 10.319.17–18K; 10.349.15–16K; 10.928.5–6K). On the other hand, it does not seem outlandish to describe their method – according to which all correct medical treatment has to do with the appropriate constriction or dilation of the pores – as a scientific theory of a kind, having to do with things (the pores and what flows through them) that are not themselves directly observable. Yet this theory itself is treated by them as apparent – apparent to reason, that is, not to sensory observation – and not as a matter of inference. On the Methodic school, see Frede 1982; with particular relation to Sextus' own account of Methodism's relation to Pyrrhonism, see Allen 2010 and Giovacchini 2008, which, despite its title, deals with the Methodists as well as the Empiricists.

Does this mean that the Methodists depart from the scientific realist presuppositions that, as I have just argued, both the Rationalists and the Empiricists seem to share? It seems to me that the answer to this is not entirely clear; it would depend on a detailed examination of the nature of the knowledge the Methodists claim to have of their theory (if that is what we want to call it). Besides, in the article cited above Frede points to numerous texts that show a willingness on their part to speculate about the underlying workings of the body, even if they do not allow it to influence their practice (13–15 in the original publication). Still, it looks as if the Methodists may be at least to some extent open to a conception of science in which it does not consist in grasping the underlying and unobservable nature of things – which would perhaps take them in the direction of something like van Fraassen's empiricism, and would certainly make them a rare exception in ancient Greek thought. See further note 21.

We are now very much in the region of Sextus' Pyrrhonism, and even some of the language is familiar from that context; "undecidable dispute" (*anepikritos diaphônia*) is a very common phrase in Sextus.[13] One can see how there could have been a significant overlap between medical Empiricism and philosophical skepticism. Indeed, Sextus' own discussion of sign inference has a good deal in common with the Empiricists' position, where he too, like the Empiricists, is abandoning science rather than conceiving of it via a different epistemic stance.

As noted earlier, "signs" in Hellenistic philosophy are means for inferring from the observed to the unobserved – or, in Sextus' terminology, from what is "clear" (*prodêlon*) or "plain" (*enarges*) to what is "unclear" (*adêlon*).[14] Both in *Against the Logicians* and in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Sextus distinguishes between various ways in which things can be unclear (*PH* 2.97–8, *M* 8.145–50); for our purposes the important cases are "unclear by nature" and "unclear for the moment." Things that are unclear by nature are those that are not such as to be ever presented to us in ordinary experience, but that may be postulated in some scientific theory, such as atoms or pores (in the skin or elsewhere). Things that are unclear for the moment are those that can figure in our ordinary experience, but are currently out of sight. Now, corresponding to these two different ways of being unclear, Sextus also distinguishes two kinds of sign – or rather, two conceptions of what signs would be if they existed (*PH* 2.100–1, *M* 8.151–5). One can speak of indicative (*endeiktika*) signs, which serve to reveal things that are unclear by nature, or one can speak of recollective or commemorative (*hupomnêstika*) signs, which reveal things that are unclear for the moment. In the former case an inference is required to something whose existence can never be directly observed, but is thought to be required given the sign that one does observe; for example, one observes sweat and, taking this to be an indicative sign of pores, infers that the body must have pores – there is no other way to account for the sweat.[15] In the latter case, as the name "recollective" suggests, one observes something

[13] "Disagreement ... which cannot be settled" in the last quotation in the previous paragraph is *anepikritos anomologia*. But *anepikritos diaphônia* occurs just a few lines earlier (*Sect Int.* p.11 Helmreich). One important difference is that the Empiricists do seem to have used the phrase to refer to a dispute that *cannot* be settled, whereas in Sextus it tends to be used of dispute that the parties have failed to settle so far; hence the widespread preference for "undecided dispute" as a translation in Sextus (which the Greek equally well admits). On this, see again Giovacchini 2008.

[14] Or "nonmanifest" in Frede's translation of Galen; note also the occurrence of the term "sign" (*sêmeion*) in the second quotation two paragraphs back.

[15] Of course, not everyone might agree about this being the only possible explanation – which is why such arguments were never, in practice, as conclusive as this makes them sound.

and, being *reminded* that that type of thing has regularly been correlated, as a matter of direct observation, with something else, is led to think that the latter thing is also in the neighborhood, even though one cannot currently observe it; Sextus' favorite example is seeing smoke and thinking that there is a fire (one's view of which may be obscured by, say, a hillside or a tall building) (*PH* 2.102, *M* 8.152). The language of recollection seems to be designed to emphasize that this is a matter of passive mental association rather than any exercise of logic or reasoning; the suggestion seems to be that belief in indicative signs differs from belief in recollective signs not only in leading one to postulate inherently unobservable entities, but also in committing one to a certain type of argumentative structure.[16]

Now, Sextus offers extensive arguments against the existence of any indicative signs (arguments that, when juxtaposed with the positive accounts of those who believe in such signs, will induce one to suspend judgment on the topic) (*PH* 2.103–33, *M* 8.159–299), while proclaiming himself quite happy to employ recollective signs (*PH* 2.102, *M* 8.156–8); he also distinguishes sharply between the role of recollective signs in ordinary life and the fact that belief in and use of indicative signs is restricted to theorists – indeed, he specifically refers to the Rationalist doctors as one group belonging under this description (*M* 8.156). Here Sextus declares himself "on the side of ordinary life" and against the fictions of the thinkers he calls the Dogmatists. Some have seen this side of Sextus as in certain respects anticipating Wittgenstein,[17] and I would not wish to deny this. But for my present purpose what I want to stress is that he is here lining himself up with ordinary patterns of thought and against any kind of scientific enterprise. It is assumed that if one restricts oneself to recollective signs, one is sticking to ordinary life and avoiding theory;[18] it is the believers in indicative signs who think that they can construct theories about the real nature of things. (As Sextus says in the opening sections of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (*PH* 1.18), the skeptic "does

[16] I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 4 of this volume.

[17] See Fogelin 1994, especially appendix B: "Two Wittgensteins"; also Pritchard 2011.

[18] This contrast, of course, presupposes an intellectually passive conception of ordinary life itself. As we saw, Sextus conceives of recollective signs as operating by means of a purely reactive psychological process, and his conception of ordinary life (in this context, at least) is in keeping with this. One might imagine someone using recollective signs as part of some truth-seeking enterprise, and that might seem to take one closer to contemporary empiricism. But Sextus shows no tendency to think of them in this way. One encounters and responds to recollective signs, but one does not think of them as the basis of a research program; and ordinary life in general is similarly conceived as a matter of reacting and responding to the stimuli with which one is presented.

physics" only in the sense of juxtaposing the theories of others, not in the sense of proposing and defending theories himself.) Moreover, it is assumed that *what it is* to engage in scientific theorizing is to postulate a series of unobservables that are taken to belong to the underlying nature of things, and that will explain the phenomena with which we are familiar. In other words, Sextus is in the same position as are the Empiricist doctors described by Galen – which is not perhaps surprising, since he appears to have been one of them himself. Their opponents who think that theorizing about the world is possible are portrayed by both authors as having a broadly realist understanding of what such theorizing involves. But the skeptics and the Empiricists themselves also come across as having the same understanding of what successful theorizing would have to be like, and in large part for that reason, they doubt that it is possible. In his *Stanford Encyclopedia* article "Scientific Realism,"[19] Chakravartty defines realism in such a way that one has to believe discoveries and theories about an underlying reality are actually possible in order to count as a realist. By this definition the skeptics and the Empiricists would of course not qualify as realists. But they seem to share their opponents' realist presuppositions about what success in science would involve.

I think that this is no accident. In a famous article called "Idealism and Greek Philosophy: What Descartes Saw and Berkeley Missed,"[20] Myles Burnyeat argued that "Idealism . . . is one of the very few major philosophical positions which did *not* receive its first formulation in antiquity" (3–4); and a central part of his approach was to reveal how ancient Greek philosophy quite generally shares "an unquestioned, unquestioning *assumption* of realism" (33). Now, one must of course be sensitive to the possibility that the term "realism" may have different connotations in different contexts. But the realism that Burnyeat was talking about is the view that there is an objective world independent of us, and that finding the truth consists in uncovering how things are in that objective independent world. It does not seem overbold to suggest that if realism, in that sense, is common ground in ancient philosophy – and I think this part of Burnyeat's case is hard to deny – then those who engaged in scientific inquiry will have been realists about science, in the sense we were discussing earlier – including being willing to posit real but unobservable entities in their theories; and the same assumptions, coupled with an acute sense of the difficulties in verifying such theories, will have led others to doubt

[19] Chakravartty 2017; see especially section 1.2, "The Three Dimensions of Realist Commitment."
[20] Burnyeat 1982.

whether science was possible. What this basic assumption of realism does not allow is alternative conceptions of what science is or should be doing *besides* uncovering the truth about this independent reality.[21]

I think in fact that Burnyeat's claim that idealism is "one of the very few" non-ancient philosophies is an exaggeration, but in a way that only confirms the central point that I am borrowing from his argument. I suspect that relativism, understood as the view that what counts as true (perhaps in some limited domain or perhaps quite generally) is shaped by some societal or individual perspective, framework, conceptual scheme, or something of the kind, is also alien to ancient philosophy. (Protagoras' famous saying "A human being is the measure of all things" – cited in Plato (*Theaetetus* 151e–152a), Sextus (*PH* 1.216, *M* 7.60), and other authors – may be raised as a counter-example, and he is certainly as close as we get to such a view in the ancient world; but the issue is complicated.[22]) More generally, I suspect the same is true of any view according to which social or psychological factors make a substantial contribution to how things actually are. I would hazard the guess that it is what Kant called his Copernican Revolution, more than anything else, that made such views possible; in any case, it seems to be in the nineteenth century onward that they make an appearance in philosophy. While ancient Greek philosophy is certainly acquainted with the idea that one's particular background or experience may affect how one sees the world, what we do not find is the idea that one's background or experience may affect the way the world is constituted; instead – and Sextus Empiricus is a good example of this, although certainly not the only one – perspective is routinely presented as a *problem* for our ability to discern how things really are. Again, reality is assumed to be objective and independent of us, and therefore our

[21] Again, the Methodists may be a partial exception to this generalization (cf. note 12). They too think that they have grasped an independent reality; but, as we saw, there may not be a clear-cut answer as to whether they regard this reality as unobservable, and therefore in need of "uncovering." So if realism by definition involves theorizing about unobservable entities, then it is not clear that the Methodists were realists. As we saw, Chakravartty's account of scientific realism does include this condition; realism on Burnyeat's understanding perhaps does not require it, though it certainly seems to invite it. In practice, however, I do not think we need to regard the Methodists as constituting a serious challenge to the general picture I am proposing. Though we may see them as leaning to some extent toward an alternative to scientific realism (again, understood as positing unobservable phenomena), it is by no means easy to see what that alternative amounts to; Galen's incredulity about their broadening of the scope of the apparent (*phainomenon*) (*Sect. Int.* p. 24, 6–21 Helmreich) is indicative of the difficulty here. In any case, all the signs are that the Methodists were radical outliers in their conception of what kinds of things can be known, and how.

[22] I discussed this issue in connection with the Sophists, the group of ancient thinkers to whom relativism has most commonly been ascribed, in Bett 1989; I returned to it briefly in Bett 2013b, section V.

perspectives – unless they are very special perspectives guaranteed to be correct, such as those of the Aristotelian *phronimos* or the Stoic sage – create an obstacle to our seeing things aright.

Returning, finally, to the question of stances: the "unquestioned, unquestioning" realism of ancient Greek philosophy would seem to rule out competing stances concerning what scientific truth is like. It will rule out anything resembling social constructivism, for the reasons just suggested. And it will also rule out anything resembling instrumentalism or verificationism. If it is uniformly assumed that there is an objective world, and that science just is the project of discovering truths about that objective world, there will be no temptation to try to reduce statements of scientific theory to statements about observations or about ways to predict observations.[23] We might even go further, and say that if Greek philosophy did not countenance any alternative stances besides realism, then maybe realism, for them, was not a stance either. Certainly, if I have been right in following Burnyeat, realism was not *articulated* in the ancient world as a reflective position, for that would have required some sense of available alternatives. And so if a stance is necessarily something that is reflectively adopted, then realism was not a stance in the ancient world. But even if one does allow the ancients' unquestioning realism to count as a stance, there is no place for voluntarism about stances in this context; the idea that competing stances may be equally rational obviously applies only if there are in fact at least two available stances, and in this case there is at most one. This has nothing to do specially with ancient skepticism, but is common ground in ancient philosophy generally.

However, there is not, as far as I can see, any in-principle reason why competing stances *could not* figure as a subject matter to which the Pyrrhonist skeptical method might be applied. Just as the Pyrrhonist lines up the arguments for and against competing theories on any other topic, one can easily imagine an assemblage of arguments for and against scientific realism, social constructivism, verificationism, etc. The Pyrrhonist's goal, as in every other case – and I will say some more about this in a

[23] Burnyeat overstated his case by claiming that truth itself was understood in the ancient Greek world as being "truth as to real existence, something's being true of an independent reality" (25). Numerous scholars have rightly objected to this claim. The ancient Greeks were not precluded, for example, from making utterances about their own psychological states, and assessing the truth-value of those utterances; an obvious philosophical example is the Cyrenaics' view that only the *pathê* (ways in which one is affected psychologically) are apprehensible, whereas the external things causing those *pathê* are not. However, rejecting this part of Burnyeat's position does not put into any doubt my point in the main text: that, given the assumption of realism, *scientific* truth was inevitably construed as truth about the objective world.

moment – would be to devise this series of arguments in such a way that they exhibit the feature of "equal strength" (*isostheneia*, *PH* 1.8), and thereby produce suspension of judgment. That this does not in fact happen in the case of epistemic stances, at least epistemic stances of the kind that we have been primarily interested in here, seems to be due to the deep-seated feature of ancient Greek thought in general that I have spent some time putting on display, namely, its unquestioning realism. But even though Pyrrhonist skepticism shares that unquestioning realism, it is at any rate not obvious to me that the basic features of Pyrrhonist skepticism depend on it; hence the idea of applying the Pyrrhonist method to epistemic stances does not seem to me inherently alien to the spirit of Pyrrhonism, even if it goes beyond anything that the Pyrrhonists actually contemplated. And so the question of what relation there might be between Pyrrhonist skepticism and voluntarism about stances still seems to be one worth considering, even if stances such as scientific realism and its various competitors do not figure among the topics the Pyrrhonists themselves discussed.

In addition, as I observed at the outset, one can speak of voluntarism in connection with individual beliefs as well as in connection with stances, and individual beliefs certainly do receive attention from the Pyrrhonists. And so I move now to my second topic, the question of Pyrrhonism's relation to epistemological voluntarism. I will mostly assume that we are talking about cases involving individual beliefs, because that reflects actual Pyrrhonist practice. But, as I said at the outset, it should be understood that whatever relation voluntarism in general has to Pyrrhonism, voluntarism about stances will in principle be in the same boat.

II

Let us go back to the characterization of voluntarism (again, about individual beliefs) that I put on display at the beginning: "the view that different, strictly incompatible beliefs regarding matters of fact may be rationally permissible choices for different agents."[24] Now, if this is a fair characterization of what voluntarism amounts to, then it seems to me that voluntarism would be acceptable to a Pyrrhonist only in a rather backhanded sense.

[24] See note 5 and accompanying main text.

The key point is that the Pyrrhonist is in the business of *withdrawing* from beliefs about matters of fact, and he is certainly not in the business of certifying beliefs as rationally permissible. To see in more detail how this works, let us look at the one-sentence account of skepticism that Sextus offers in the opening chapters of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*: "The skeptical ability is one that produces oppositions among things that appear and things that are thought in any way whatsoever, one from which, because of the equal strength in the opposing objects and accounts, we come first to suspension of judgment, and after that to tranquility" (*PH* 1.8). The skeptic, then, is an expert at producing suspension of judgment. The method is to assemble a multitude of conflicting arguments and impressions on some topic. As noted a few minutes ago, these conflicting arguments and impressions are designed so as to have "equal strength" (*isostheneia*). Along with many others, I interpret "equal strength" as a psychological rather than a logical or epistemic notion. It is not that all the opposing positions are judged to be equally well justified in some objective sense; it is simply that one is made to find all of them equally persuasive or convincing. This raises the possibility that the presentation of these opposing positions needs to be tailored to the audience; those already predisposed toward some positions will need to be given more powerful arguments for the others, so as to create the required balance. Indeed, for this very reason, Sextus actually says at one point that "equal strength" is generally achieved by concentrating on arguments for the more counter-intuitive positions (*M* 7.443).

The next stage is suspension of judgment, which is presented as a result of the "equal strength" of the opposing positions. Here too we are speaking of a certain kind of psychological effect. One does not decide that one *rationally ought* to suspend judgment, and suspension of judgment is not any kind of conclusion of an argument; suspension of judgment, or the necessity of suspension of judgment, is not something the skeptic is trying to demonstrate. If suspension of judgment is to be truly unrestricted, that would be a self-defeating project, since the conclusion of the demonstration would itself be something one endorsed, and thereby did not suspend judgment about; the same might also be true of the principles of logic, or the canons of rationality, that one relied on in reaching this conclusion. Rather, suspension of judgment is something the skeptic is trying to *produce* – in his audience, or perhaps in himself. If he does a good enough job of generating a situation of "equal strength" among the various alternatives on any given topic, one will simply feel no more inclination toward any one of these alternatives than toward any other; so suspension

of judgment is the only possible outcome. For this reason "no more" (*ouden mallon*), indicating this lack of any greater inclination toward some alternatives over others, is a favorite phrase of the Pyrrhonists.

Suspension of judgment, then, is a passive effect. One needs, of course, to attend to the arguments offered for or against the various alternative positions on the topic in question, in order to reach suspension of judgment; but suspension of judgment is not itself something that is argued for – it is something that happens to one. And to suspend judgment about some topic is to cease to have definite beliefs about that topic. There is a long-standing debate about the scope of the skeptic's intended suspension of judgment.[25] I said that it is supposed to apply to "any topic whatever," but this conceals an ambiguity. Sextus says that the skeptic does not have beliefs on "any matter among the unclear things investigated via the sciences" (*PH* 1.13), and some scholars have thought that this leaves room for a class of non-theoretical, everyday beliefs that are consistent with a skeptical outlook.[26] But since we are interested in Pyrrhonism's relation to issues in the philosophy of science, we need not concern ourselves with that can of worms; it is clear that the skeptic withdraws from belief about *at least* all theoretical or scientific questions.

The final stage of the skeptic's progression is tranquility (*ataraxia*); a predictable further result of suspending judgment is that one is released from certain kinds of worry. Here again there are complicated questions, discussed in several other chapters in this volume: about the nature of this tranquility, the reasons why it is supposed to come about, and its importance in the entire Pyrrhonist outlook. But again, we need not worry about these questions here, because they do not affect the question of skepticism and voluntarism.

Let us now come directly to that question. Does Pyrrhonist skepticism countenance or encourage the idea that (to return to the characterization of voluntarism that I have already twice appealed to) different, strictly incompatible beliefs regarding matters of fact may be rationally permissible choices for different agents? It seems to me that the answer is clearly no. The Pyrrhonist is trying to get you to stop believing anything, at least about theoretical or scientific matters; he has no reason to suggest that any

[25] On this topic, see the classic series of essays collected in Burnyeat and Frede 1997. See also Brennan 1994; Perin 2010b; Morison 2014, section 3.4; Brennan and Roberts 2018, section 4.

[26] See especially Michael Frede, "The Skeptic's Beliefs," in Burnyeat and Frede 1997, and Brennan 1994.

such beliefs, whether incompatible or not, are rationally permissible.[27] That is not to say that he is trying to show that these beliefs are rationally *im*permissible, either, for the reasons mentioned earlier. Again, he is not trying to *show* anything, but to do something – namely, subvert belief; this is not the same as delivering a verdict on the status of any belief, and the skeptic is not interested in doing that. And so, inasmuch as voluntarism does deliver a verdict on the status of competing beliefs, the skeptic would want nothing to do with it. Of course, given the Pyrrhonist skeptic's insistence on "no more," as explained just now, there is a sense in which one could say that according to skepticism, both of two incompatible beliefs are *equally* rationally permissible; neither one is to be preferred to the other, on epistemic grounds or for that matter on any other grounds. But this is what I meant when I said that Pyrrhonism could accommodate voluntarism only in a backhanded sense. The spirit of voluntarism, if I understand it right, is to give one license, in certain cases, to hold either one of two conflicting beliefs – to say that either one is, to put it in a vague vernacular, "all right." But to say that it is no better to hold one belief than another is not necessarily to say that either one is all right; and the skeptic, while allowing the former claim, will not allow the latter, because he will not be willing to let *any* belief stand unchallenged. While voluntarism is in a certain sense permissive with respect to beliefs, skepticism is in the business of reducing the number of your beliefs (at least in the theoretical domain) to zero. Voluntarism and Pyrrhonist skepticism are not exactly polar opposites, because, as I have emphasized, they are not competing instances of the same enterprise; voluntarism is a view about what one may legitimately believe, whereas skepticism is not a view of any kind. But there is nonetheless a certain sort of opposition between them, which we could put very crudely by saying that voluntarism is pro-belief and skepticism is anti-belief; voluntarism (in certain limited contexts) lets you believe what you want, and skepticism does no such thing.

If there is a place where ancient skepticism and voluntarism might find common ground, it is not, I think, in the Pyrrhonist tradition. Rather, it is in the period of the history of Plato's Academy that is also regularly referred to as skeptical (though this was not a term the Academics of this period used of themselves), and specifically in the latest phase of that

[27] In addition, the Pyrrhonist does not regard beliefs as matters of *choice*; the Pyrrhonist's project does not proceed by trying to get one to refrain from making certain choices (whether rationally permissible or not). This gives an additional dimension to the view that I develop in this paragraph: that voluntarism is permissive with respect to beliefs and skepticism is not. Thanks to Casey Perin for pointing this out.

period. Philo of Larissa, in the early first century BC, has been referred to as "the last of the Academic skeptics,"[28] and there is certainly some sense to this; but it is clear that his skepticism, if that is the right name for it, is of a highly mitigated kind, not entirely unlike the "mitigated skepticism" that Hume associates with the Academy in general, by contrast with the extreme and untenable skepticism that he associates with Pyrrhonism.[29] Leaving aside the rights and wrongs of Hume's characterizations, it appears from several sources, especially Sextus and Cicero, that Philo, while insisting like any ancient skeptic that no one had knowledge or certainty, was nonetheless prepared to accept some impressions as persuasive or probable, and thus allowed a species of tentative or provisional belief. The precise details are controversial, but this much is clear.[30] And Cicero himself, who studied in his youth with Philo, certainly looks as if he adopts something like this position in his *Academica* and elsewhere (e.g., *Acad.* 2.7–9). This even allows him to accept, again in a tentative or provisional way, the views of other schools on certain topics – most notably Stoicism, for which he seems to have had a certain attraction, especially in the ethical area; his *De Officiis*, *On Duties*, is a prime example of this. This reading has recently been challenged by a new interpretation that makes Cicero in the end a much more radical skeptic than has usually been thought.[31] But again, we need not worry about precise questions of attribution; at any rate it seems clear that a mitigated variety of skepticism existed as the skeptical Academy neared its end.

Yet the idea of equally convincing alternatives, leading to suspension of judgment about any final or definitive answer, is one that also figures quite prominently in Cicero. And I see nothing in the mitigated skeptical view to rule out the possibility that on certain occasions two opposing positions might both strike one as persuasive, but equally so, and therefore equally worthy of being accepted, albeit on a provisional basis. I am not aware of any passage where Cicero or anyone else actually talks about this, but it does not seem contrary to the spirit of the position. Perhaps a mitigated skeptic would in fact insist that one should not accept any position unless it seems *more* persuasive than any of the alternatives, but since there is no

[28] In the subtitle of the most substantial treatment of his thought; see Brittain 2001.

[29] See especially *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, section XII, "Of the Academical or Sceptical Philosophy" (a convenient edition is Hume 1993).

[30] A comprehensive interpretation is offered in Brittain 2001; see also Bett 2002, a review of this book. There is a more concise discussion of Philo and his relation to other Academics, together with references to alternative interpretations, in the introduction to Brittain 2006.

[31] See Brittain 2016.

question of a mitigated skeptic claiming unimpeachable justification for any position adopted, it is not obvious why this should have to be so. And if not, then we would at least have an opening to a kind of voluntarism. By the standards proposed, it would be "all right" – to revert to the vague term that I used earlier – to adopt (again, tentatively or provisionally, while suspending judgment about the ultimate truth) either one of two incompatible and equally rationally permissible beliefs, and it could be a matter of choice which one (if either) was adopted. Again, there is no evidence, as far as I can see, that this possibility actually occurred to anyone at the time, but the mitigated skeptical position does not appear to preclude it.

To repeat, however, this rapprochement of skepticism and voluntarism only works, if it does, because we are dealing with a variety of skepticism that allows the holding of beliefs. But that is precisely to say that it represents a backing down from the "pure" skepticism, shared by the earlier Academics as well as by the Pyrrhonists, in which rigorous suspension of judgment – that is to say, avoidance of beliefs – is at center stage. Indeed, there is evidence that it was precisely a discontent with this softening of skepticism in the Academy that led Aenesidemus, himself originally a member of the Academy, to branch out and found a new brand of skepticism claiming inspiration from Pyrrho, thus initiating the tradition to which Sextus later belonged.[32] In any case, if we return to the main issue that I have been exploring in this section, the verdict is clear: Pyrrhonism (at least as represented by Sextus) and voluntarism don't mix. And, to return to the matters I was discussing in the first section, this will be true whether we are thinking of voluntarism about individual beliefs or voluntarism about stances.[33]

[32] See the summary of Aenesidemus' book *Pyrrhonist Discourses* (*Purrôneioi logoi*) in Photius, *Bibliotheca* 169b18–171a4. Photius emphasizes Aenesidemus' view that the Academy, "especially the one now" (170a14–15), is in reality no different from the decidedly non-skeptical Stoic school.

[33] I would like to thank Anjan Chakravartty for inviting me to contribute to the very stimulating 2012 workshop at Notre Dame for which this chapter was originally written, and for arranging for the papers presented at that workshop to be collected for publication. I also thank him and Casey Perin for some very helpful comments in the run-up to that publication; and Alex Wilson for pushing me to reflect about the relation of the Methodic school of medicine to the main theme that I pursue in Section I.

CHAPTER 12

Can We Be Ancient Skeptics?

I Outline of the Project

No one today is a full-blown Aristotelian or Platonist. Of course, many people would be prepared to claim certain influences from Aristotle or Plato. But there is a great deal in the outlooks of both that is just no longer believable. Nor do I mean to suggest that this is a new phenomenon; even the Platonists of late antiquity, for example, did not take on board *all* of what they found in Plato. When you put forward definite views,[1] you run the risk of even the sympathetic in later generations dismissing them, because of the advance of knowledge, changes in intellectual fashion, or various other developments.

But what about a philosophical outlook that professes to have no intellectual commitments? This, in broad outline, is the situation of the skeptics of the ancient Greco-Roman world. If definite views got Aristotle and Plato into trouble with the march of history, could one perhaps escape this fate by avoiding definite views altogether? This is what I would like to explore in this chapter: whether, or in what respects, the skepticism advanced in the ancient period might still be viable today.

Ancient skepticism comes in a number of different varieties. There is a broad division between the Academic and Pyrrhonian traditions, and within each of these traditions there is evidence of considerable development over time. Since with one exception the thinkers in question are known to us through fragments and secondhand, often critical reports, it is not surprising that many questions of interpretation in this area remain controversial. On this occasion I would like to avoid such scholarly intricacies, concentrating on the one exception, Sextus Empiricus, the

[1] Along with most but not all interpreters of Plato, I assume that many of the views discussed in Plato's dialogues are views that Plato himself held – no doubt with varying degrees of confidence, and always with a willingness to rethink, but with some level of acceptance nonetheless. Anyone who disagrees can simply ignore the case of Plato.

Pyrrhonist skeptic whose writings have survived in considerable bulk. I shall also ignore questions concerning differences and possible developments *within* the surviving work of Sextus, limiting myself to the skepticism explicitly presented in book 1 of his best-known work, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, and on view in the rest of that work and at least substantial portions of his other works. The question, then, is to what extent a skeptical outlook recognizably akin to that of Sextus, as revealed by these writings, could still reasonably be adopted by someone today.

As is well known, Sextus' skepticism has two interrelated dimensions. There is the part where one constructs oppositions, leading to suspension of judgment, and there is the practical effect of this. On the one hand, then, one considers what can be said for and against various conclusions. Sextus offers no explicit limit on the subjects of these conclusions; in his one-sentence thumbnail sketch of skepticism near the beginning of *PH* (1.8), he says that they may apply to "things that appear and things that are thought in any way whatever." To judge from his own works, they at least include topics within the three standard areas of philosophy – logic, physics, and ethics – as well as other areas of specialized intellectual expertise: grammar, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, astrology, and music.[2] In any case, Sextus assembles a huge variety of what in *PH* 1.8 he calls "opposing objects and accounts" in these areas. The "oppositions" are very often arrived at by means of intricate philosophical argumentation, either summarized from other philosophers or devised by the skeptics themselves; however, they sometimes also consist in, or rely on, ordinary commonsense impressions on some topic (for example, the existence of motion – *PH* 3.65–6, *M* 10.62, 66–8, 168). Now, the effect of all this juxtaposing of conflicting arguments and impressions is that one suspends judgment on the topics in question. This is because they have the feature of "equal strength" (*isostheneia*); that is, on being faced with the two or more opposing positions on some topic, one is no more inclined to accept any one of them than any other – they balance each other in terms of their tendency to convince one. How this works in detail is a complicated question, to which I shall return in the next section. But Sextus says that the production of these oppositions comes about because of the skeptic's

[2] Logic, physics, and ethics are examined in *PH* 2 and 3 and, at much greater length, in *Against the Logicians*, *Against the Physicists*, and *Against the Ethicists* (collectively referred to as *Adversus Mathematicos* 7–11, or *M* 7–11 for short). The six specialized fields are those covered in Sextus' third surviving work, *Adversus Mathematicos* 1–6. At the start of *M* (1.7), Sextus implies that there is a rationale for the choice of these six fields; unfortunately he does not tell us what it is. I have discussed this further in the introduction to Bett 2018b, especially section IV.

"ability" (*dunamis*), and it is a reasonable assumption that this includes the ability to make them have "equal strength."

This, then, is what I shall call the oppositional dimension of Sextus' skepticism; one is led to suspend judgment on (at least) the claims advanced in philosophy – in the ancient understanding of the term in which it includes the more fundamental aspects of natural science – and numerous other disciplines, because of the oppositions generated between or among these claims.[3] The practical dimension is the effect that Sextus supposes this to have. The final component in the thumbnail sketch at *PH* 1.8 is that suspending judgment results in *ataraxia*, tranquility or freedom from worry. Elsewhere in the opening chapters of *PH* 1 he tells us that the skeptic started out seeking *ataraxia* through the discovery of the truth; he is troubled by conflicting appearances of things and wishes to eliminate this trouble by figuring out which of these appearances are true and which false (1.12, 26). But finding himself unable to get beyond the conflict, he suspends judgment, and it turns out that this itself produces the *ataraxia* he had been seeking by another means. It sounds, then – although Sextus does not elaborate on this story – as if the initial trouble comes from not knowing how things are; one cares greatly about settling the pervasive conflicts in our views and impressions of things, and one has so far failed to do so. But this initial motivation is lost when one suspends judgment; it simply ceases to matter which of the conflicting appearances is true. Perhaps this is because previously one was strongly inclined to favor some views and impressions over others, but was uncomfortably aware that the presence of conflicting views or impressions, equally strongly supported by others, meant that one could not simply rest content with one's own perspective; once one comes to suspend judgment, one loses both the inclination to favor one side and the discomfort associated with the presence of the other side.

[3] Some scholars think that the skeptic also suspends judgment (in some sense) about everyday beliefs – in fact, about all beliefs whatever. In this case, this side of the skeptic's activity may be less theory-oriented than I have made it sound. (Although not necessarily, since on some versions of this reading, the route to suspension of judgment about everyday matters is through consideration of the possible forms of theoretical support they might be given.) For a variety of perspectives on this, see Brennan 1994; Burnyeat and Frede 1997; Perin 2010b; recent assessments of the state of the debate are Morison 2014, section 3.4; Brennan and Roberts 2018, section 4. While I find this a very difficult matter to assess, it is at least clear that Sextus' own focus in his writings is almost entirely on the kinds of claims made by philosophers and other theorists; and this provides some justification for restricting our attention to whether, or how far, there might be a counterpart skeptical activity today that focused on broadly theoretical questions.

While this is an intelligible account, apparently suggested by the remarks I have summarized, it is not, as I say, an account that Sextus explicitly develops. However, he does in several places discuss why the skeptic has *ataraxia* and the non-skeptic does not, and here a somewhat different picture emerges (*PH* 1.27–30, 3.235–8, *M* 11.110–67). The idea is that a commitment to certain things being, in their real nature, good and others bad leads to tremendous turmoil; one is desperate to get or to retain the good things and to avoid or rid oneself of the bad things. This commitment to things being by nature good and bad is associated by Sextus both with non-skeptical philosophers and with ordinary people (*PH* 1.30). But the skeptic, of course, lacks any such commitment, and is therefore free of an immense source of distress. Sextus apparently sees no conflict between this account and the one suggested by the remarks about the abandonment of the search for truth, since at one point he interweaves them both in the same passage (*PH* 1.26–30); and indeed, there is no reason why one could not accept both of them simultaneously. However, they do seem to point in very different directions; one concerns one's attitude toward discovering, or failing to discover, the truth, whereas the other concerns the emotional effects of holding, or not holding, certain specific beliefs – whether or not they are true.[4] It is unfortunate, then, that Sextus never says anything to help clarify the relation between them. However, if we are trying to assess how much of Sextus' outlook could still be taken seriously today, there is no harm in separating them. Elsewhere I have said some things about the plausibility of the second picture, the one centered around good and bad.[5] On this occasion, I will leave that aside and will say something about the first picture; this will be the topic of the final section.

Until then, I will concentrate on what I have called the oppositional side of Sextus' skepticism – that is, the production of suspension of judgment – and to what extent it might be a viable project today. As a first step toward that discussion, we need to look more closely at one aspect of Sextus' procedure.

[4] This last point is important. Sextus' claim is that believing that certain things are by nature good and others by nature bad is a source of distress. The truth or otherwise of these beliefs, or whether or not they are justified, has nothing to do with it; for example, worries about whether one might be *mistaken* in these beliefs – which might have formed a link between this line of thought and the other one – plays no role at all in the discussion. The problem is simply the *holding* of the beliefs.

[5] See Chapter 8 in this volume; also Bett 2010 and Bett 2013a.

II How to Understand "Equal Strength"

How are we to understand Sextus' statement that the opposing arguments and impressions assembled by the skeptic have *isostheneia*, "equal strength?" One way to interpret it is that one judges the opposing positions to be of equal rational merit, and one suspends judgment because one draws the conclusion that one ought rationally to do so.[6] Another is in purely psychological terms. Here it is not that one judges the opposing positions to be of equal rational merit, and one does not draw a conclusion to the effect that suspension of judgment is rationally required. Rather, one simply finds oneself equally inclined or disinclined toward either side (or every side) of the case, and given that situation, one finds oneself declining to assent to any of the alternatives. Of course, since a great many of the opposing positions are supported by arguments,[7] one's engagement with these arguments, in virtue of the rational capacities that one has developed as part of one's normal upbringing and perhaps also through philosophical training, will generally be part of the explanation for one's arriving at this state of equal inclination or disinclination. But this state is not itself one of taking there to be equally good reasons on each side; it is a state of feeling pulled with equal force toward or against each side, and that is all.[8] In the past I have favored this second reading, and I still think that it makes the best sense of the main bulk of Sextus' text. Attributing to Sextus commitments concerning what is rational seems itself to be in conflict with the suspension of judgment that he professes;[9] I prefer to read the skeptic's susceptibility to rational argument – and, as I said, this is certainly a very important part of how the opposing positions affect him – as a brute fact about him and the influences on him, rather than anything he endorses. But Sextus' frequent talk of the *necessity* of suspending judgment is at times hard not to read as referring to rational necessity, a necessity imposed by the merit of the arguments. This is particularly true when it comes to the

[6] For a detailed development of this sort of reading, see Perin 2010a, chapter 2. See also Vogt 2012a, chapter 5.3.

[7] Many, but not all. As I said, among the opposing positions are also simple everyday observations, such as that things move.

[8] For a version of this reading, see Williams 1988, especially 555–6. See also note 10 below.

[9] Perin 2010a, 42–4, considers this objection, but his reply to it – treating Sextus' attitude toward reasons for belief as something that merely *appears* to him, not as itself the content of a belief – seems to me unconvincing; I do not see how to understand an attitude about reasons for belief as a mere non-doxastic seeming. On this, Myles Burnyeat's argument in Burnyeat 1983 (137–41) still seems to me right. Burnyeat presents this as an objection to Sextus, but I would prefer to take it as a reason to avoid, if possible, any reading of Sextus that involves him in attitudes toward what *should* or *should not* be believed. As I go on to say, however, I am no longer convinced that this is entirely possible.

groups of standardized arguments known as the Modes (*PH* 1.35–179).[10] In what follows I shall generally try to remain neutral between these two interpretations, although on occasion it will make a difference which we adopt.

Either way, the idea that the opposing sides have "equal strength" is still in need of explanation. As noted earlier, I think that this has to be connected with the reference to the skeptic's "ability." The skeptic is someone who is *very good* at bringing about these oppositions, including the "equal strength" that they are said to possess. How should we read this? On either interpretation, the skeptic is someone with an expertise at lining up the cases on each side of some issue so as to make them equally attractive – to the listener or to himself. On the psychological interpretation there are no inherent limitations on how the opposing positions are made equally attractive to their intended audience; on the rationalist interpretation, it is due to the fact that the grounds produced for each position are rationally compelling to the same degree. But either way, in order for this situation of "equal strength" to be produced on *every issue* considered, one may well feel that there is liable to be a considerable element of manipulation. The skeptic may *bring it about* that one is equally persuaded (rationally or otherwise) by either side, but it is natural to suspect that in some cases this is bound to be a contrived result. That is to say, in order to get "equal strength," some considerations will need to be deliberately suppressed and others played up; any normal person in the same intellectual context who was investigating the issue *without* suspension of judgment as a goal would find the considerations on either side quite imbalanced, and exceptional effort is therefore required to make them strike someone as equal. This is especially problematic, of course, if the person in whom suspension of judgment is supposed to be induced is oneself – which, as Sextus makes clear, is part of the skeptic's program (e.g., *PH* 1.31).

The way out of this would be for the skeptic to restrict his activity to areas where there is genuine room for uncertainty and where significant support can be offered on two or more sides of the question – relying perhaps on a combination of argumentation and ordinary experience or common sense, but without needing to force the issue in the way just suggested. In fact, while he would of course never claim to be certain about this, Sextus seems to proceed as if this is the case at least for all matters

[10] See Chapter 6 in this volume; also Bett 2011. Here I illustrate why the Modes are hard to fit with the psychological interpretation, while also expressing a general preference for that interpretation.

considered by philosophers and other theoreticians. This seems a large assumption even for his own day,[11] which is why I have spent a little time on it; but, as we shall see, in at least one important instance it may have made more sense in the ancient context than today. In any case, whether it is realistic to expect that we could bring about a situation of "equal strength" will turn out to be an important test of how far a version of Sextus' Pyrrhonism might be viable for us.

III Suspension of Judgment Then and Now

To what extent, then, is suspension of judgment about theoretical matters viable today? There are a number of areas in which it still seems very much a live option. Ethics, political theory, and religion are examples that spring as readily to mind as any. In all these areas, in both the academic and the popular arenas, there is pervasive disagreement, including on the question of what it would take for consensus to be achieved. Of course, the terms of many debates have changed a great deal. For example, many contemporary philosophers regard ethical discourse as involving expressions of feeling rather than statements of fact. Sextus would have perceived this as undermining any positive ethical project, since he takes ethical thinkers, by definition, to believe that certain things are, in the nature of things, good and others bad. But nowadays such a non-cognitivist view of ethics is often understood as entirely compatible with the development of positive ethical theory; to name just a few, J. L. Mackie, R. M. Hare, and Peter Singer have at various times espoused versions of the former while enthusiastically engaging in the latter.[12] Again, modern religions are very different from the kind of religion with which Sextus was familiar, and this would surely affect the nature of the oppositions that might be constructed. But none of this alters the fact that in the subjects I have mentioned, the prospects for assembling equally powerful opposing arguments on a multitude of topics seem to remain just as good as ever.

The same might be said more generally of philosophy (in our modest contemporary understanding of the term). There are clearly any number of

[11] Vogt 2012a, 130–1, suggests that what makes the expectation plausible that equal credibility will be achieved on each side is the skeptic's "immersion into argument." But it is not clear why involvement in argument makes "equal strength" more likely; we must be dealing with topics where the arguments are not overwhelmingly on one side, and I see no reason to expect that all topics will fit this description. In any case, as I noted, Sextus does not always rely on arguments to construct his oppositions; sometimes on one side he relies on ordinary experience.

[12] Mackie 1977; Singer 1979; Hare 1981.

debates in metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and other areas that are wide open, where strongly held opposing positions are aired and where someone who was not already a party to one of these positions might easily find several of them equally persuasive. Among these other areas is epistemology, where philosophers can be found who actually call themselves Pyrrhonists or Pyrrhonians, the most prominent being Robert Fogelin.[13] I have chosen not to emphasize this neo-Pyrrhonism because it actually seems to me very different from Pyrrhonism of the ancient variety. First, it is restricted to epistemology, being largely centered around the Five Modes of Agrippa, which together argue that rational justification is impossible; this is just one small corner of Pyrrhonism as understood by Sextus. Second, it appears to me to *endorse* the conclusion of the Five Modes, rather than suspending judgment about it, and hence not to qualify as skeptical, in the ancient sense, at all.[14] However, suspension of judgment about theories of justification, including about whether any of them can succeed, is surely one possible outcome in epistemology, just as suspension of judgment is clearly possible in much of philosophy.[15]

A would-be contemporary skeptic attempting to follow Sextus' model would therefore find plenty of material to work on. But there are limits to how far this could go. In the case of the natural sciences, in particular, a somewhat different picture emerges. It is not that there is no room for suspension of judgment on questions concerning science; far from it, as we shall see, and in some cases the questions are ones that would not have occurred to Sextus. However, many other questions do not admit of this treatment. The contrast with the ancient period in this case is significant enough, and complicated enough, that I shall devote most of the rest of this section to it.

One fundamental point that I have in mind here is simply the *success* of modern science. In the ancient world basic scientific questions were almost entirely up for genuine debate. For example, is matter atomic, or is it continuous and potentially divisible at any point whatever? Each of these positions had its proponents, who brought forward arguments for them,

[13] See Fogelin 1994, and for discussion of Fogelin's ideas, Sinnott-Armstrong 2004.

[14] How to interpret the Modes in Sextus himself is not obvious, precisely because they give the impression of arguing for a definite conclusion. On this, see further Chapter 6 in this volume.

[15] When first writing this chapter, I received an email advertisement for a volume called *Current Controversies in Epistemology* (Neta 2014). Sometimes it seems as if publishers and editors in philosophy design their collections with the specific goal of making suspension of judgment more likely (and not only in epistemology). At any rate, the prevalence of such volumes testifies to the fact that suspension of judgment is often a reasonable option.

and there was no clear prospect of settling the dispute in a way that would generally be deemed conclusive. Part of the reason may have been the absence of experimental techniques that could be thought to serve as a neutral basis for decision; abstract argument was really the only means to support either position, and the abstract arguments on both sides were sophisticated. This situation naturally created a favorable climate for the Pyrrhonist procedure of assembling oppositions of "equal strength." Today's atomic theory, however, is just not open to challenge. Of course, important inquiry continues, at the Large Hadron Collider and elsewhere; I do not wish to deny that a great many questions remain unresolved. But there is a huge, systematic body of findings in this area, supported by massive evidence, that are not subject to equally plausible opposing arguments. The periodic table, for instance, is not up for debate, except at the margins.[16]

The success of modern science has also seeped into our lives, and this is another reason why suspending judgment about its results is no longer an option, except in certain limited cases. We have electricity, plastic, antibiotics, radar – to stick just with old-fashioned examples – because of various scientific breakthroughs of the past. Unless we are embarking on some radical post-Cartesian skepticism about the external world in general,[17] there is no room for questioning the existence of these items themselves or their scientific provenance. Sextus often seems to assume a sharp division between the activities of daily life and the activities of theorists; what ordinary people do might be exactly the same, even if the theorists had never engaged in their projects.[18] While there may still be theoretical subjects of which that is true, the natural sciences are not among them; and this just reinforces the conclusion that a great deal of modern scientific theory is not a possible subject for a contemporary version of Sextus' skepticism.

The last two paragraphs may have sounded one-sided and even complacent. It is now time to introduce some other sides to the story. Without retracting anything I have said, I shall now offer two complications: first,

[16] Or perhaps I should say "the identity of the elements listed in the periodic table." There have in fact been many different versions of the table itself, reflecting different people's views about how best to structure the scheme of elements so as to best exhibit their salient relations with one another. But there is a body of knowledge, not up for dispute except at the margins, about what these elements are.

[17] On the fact that skepticism about the external world is alien to Sextus' approach, see most recently Williams 2010.

[18] This is not to deny that the conclusions of some theorists might overlap with what people say in ordinary life – for example, as we noted earlier, on the existence of motion.

the public questioning of a number of important scientific results, and second, modern philosophical reflection on the nature of the scientific enterprise. In both these areas, suspension of judgment relating to science can and probably does exist.

One occasionally hears of extreme cases of the rejection of science – of people who refuse to trust any of modern medicine,[19] for example, allowing their children to die rather than taking them for well-established medical procedures. In such cases it is hard to see how suspension of judgment could get started. One might be in the grip of an anti-modern world-view that dictated the rejection of medicine; or one might belong to the great majority who rely when needed on pharmaceuticals, surgery, etc. (not to mention automobiles, electricity, etc.). It is hard to imagine a frame of mind in which these global alternatives might strike someone as *equally* persuasive; if this is possible, it is surely extremely rare (and when it does occur, perhaps temporary, during a process of conversion from one to the other). However, there are numerous cases where one can find an overwhelming scientific consensus, coupled with widespread popular disbelief about it, and this is more significant. The disbelievers have not in general rejected the modern world and its dependence on scientific results; but on certain topics that are matters of vociferous public debate, they find the scientific picture difficult or impossible to accept. Climate change and (at least in the United States) evolution are prominent examples.[20] So could there be equally powerful opposing positions on either side of these issues?

I think the answer is that it depends what "power" amounts to, and this brings us back to the psychological versus the rationalist interpretations of "equal strength." On the rationalist interpretation, there would need to be equally good reasons produced against the existence of evolution and climate change and for their existence. In the current state of understanding of these issues, it seems very unlikely that this could be done.[21] On the

[19] I mean, who refuse to believe that modern medical procedures really work or have a solid basis. As distinct from this, there are many ethical or political reasons why someone might abjure certain technologies, without questioning the truth of the scientific theories that led to their development. Also, to be clear, I am not denying that a great many medical procedures are experimental and open to question; I am speaking here of matters like the use of pharmaceuticals to cure simple infections.

[20] A number of other examples are discussed in Oreskes and Conway 2010. The goal of this work is anything but suspensive; it intends to expose the fraud that has made these issues matters of debate when they should be considered settled. But the various cases they discuss seem amenable to the kind of picture I am developing here. Thanks to Stéphane Marchand for drawing my attention to the relevance of this work.

[21] I assume that the anti-evolution and anti-climate change positions are fueled by prejudice rather than any good reasons, coupled with, in the first case, a naïve conception of the relations between science and religion and, in the second, short-term political and economic interests in certain sectors

psychological interpretation, however, one merely needs to be brought to a state of equal inclination for and against, regardless of how this is done. And in some parts of the world in the present day, it seems quite possible that someone could be brought into this state. For someone who was not a scientist, the scientific consensus on the one side, combined with the sheer loud noise of opposition on the other, might bring someone to be no more inclined in one direction than the other, and hence to suspend judgment about one or other of these issues.

In certain cases, then, a widely and vocally held opinion *about* a scientific question might itself affect whether suspension of judgment on that question was feasible. There need not be anything surprising here. As I have indicated, Sextus sometimes brings everyday opinions about things – on the existence of god, to take a new example – into the mix of opposing views having "equal strength"; and on either interpretation of "equal strength," the feasibility of suspension of judgment will depend on the argumentative context, state of knowledge, and other factors particular to the intellectual environment in which our potential skeptic is situated. The skeptic's "ability" needs to be flexible and to adapt itself to the nature of the disputes prevailing in a given time and place. Of course, accepting that skepticism about evolution or climate change is, in at least some circumstances, possible tells us nothing about why it might be desirable; we shall return to this issue at the end. For now, I simply observe that the success of modern science does not necessarily preclude skepticism in those cases in which science and public opinion conflict; and these cases are often important. I cannot think of a case in Sextus that is clearly of this kind; he perhaps comes closest to it in his tenth Mode, where some of the examples involve a conflict between mythical beliefs and dogmatic suppositions (*PH* 1.161). But a conflict between science and religion was certainly possible in the ancient world – Aristophanes' *Clouds* provides a prominent illustration – and these cases (again, at least if we follow the psychological interpretation of "equal strength") do not seem alien to Sextus' spirit.

I come now to my second "complication." Although much of modern science is settled, in a way that ancient science never was, there is by no

of society (again, see Oreskes and Conway 2010). If so, even if we accept that what count as good reasons can vary with the context of the debate and the mindset of the persons involved in it, it seems hard to imagine that equally good reasons could be produced on both sides of these issues. Of course, I am speaking of the broad propositions that evolution and human-induced climate change are real; as in any other areas of science, there is much uncertainty and genuine debate on matters of detail.

means a philosophical consensus on what scientific success is. In the ancient world it was assumed that what science – or "physics," as it was then called – was supposed to do was to capture the way things objectively are in the world independent of us. This is an important aspect of what Myles Burnyeat has called the "unquestioned, unquestioning *assumption* of realism" in ancient Greek thought.[22] Of course, not everyone thought that this was possible, the skeptics themselves being among the most prominent to challenge any pretensions to have pinned down the objective state of things. But to the extent that such challenges were found convincing, this was counted as a failure for science; neither the skeptics nor anyone else questioned the realist conception of *what it would be like* for science to succeed.[23] Now, however, things are different. While scientific realism is still a respectable position – indeed, one of the main contenders – there are numerous other alternatives. For a period in the mid-twentieth century, verificationism was one; and while the strict verificationist program was not taken seriously for long, it has been supplanted by numerous more sophisticated forms of empiricism, relativism, constructivism, and instrumentalism. Exploring these views is well beyond the scope of this chapter.[24] But the central point is that on any of these views, contrary to realism, what counts as true, in science and perhaps in other fields, is determined in part by something about us: by what we can observe, by the theory-laden character of our observations, by the perspectives we bring to the inquiry, by the interests the research is intended to serve, and so on.

This disagreement in the philosophy of science – a variety of opinions at the meta-level, so to speak, of which there is no counterpart in the ancient world – has two consequences for our topic. First, given this difference in ancient and modern approaches, many of the non-realist positions in contemporary philosophy of science would have seemed to Sextus like grist for the skeptic's mill. Arguments to the effect that scientific theories, even the best ones, are shaped by features of our own outlooks, rather than being faithful descriptions of an entirely independent reality, would have come across to him not as ways of characterizing science's legitimate procedures, but as ways of *undermining* science's credentials – precisely

[22] Burnyeat 1982, 33. I discuss this point in greater detail in Chapter 11 of this volume, Section 2.

[23] If realism is understood as the view that reality is independent of us and we are capable of, or have succeeded in, understanding it, then a skeptic is of course not a realist. But if realism is the view that reality is independent of us and that success in understanding it *would* consist in grasping the nature of this independent reality, then Sextus is a realist; for him, the project at which the dogmatists have tried and (at least so far) failed is that of pinning down the *hupokeimena*, the "underlying things."

[24] For a brief introduction and a guide to further reading, see Psillos 2006 and Sidelle 2006.

the kind of thing a skeptic might well want to engage in as part of a strategy for producing suspension of judgment about its legitimacy or feasibility. Sextus is very well aware that features of the perceiver may affect how things are perceived; but he sees this as a route toward doubting whether we are in a position to grasp how things really are – this is the whole point of the subgroup of Ten Modes centered on the perceiving subject (the first four, according to him, *PH* 1.38). The idea that how the world is might in part be *constituted* by our ways of seeing it does not occur to him. Thus, although skepticism about particular scientific theories may be off the table in a great many cases, skepticism about the scientific enterprise in general – whether it can do what it purports to do – might well have struck Sextus himself, were he to be transported to our time, as highly attractive.

Second, this array of different positions about the nature of science opens the possibility of a contemporary application of the Pyrrhonist program to this disagreement itself. There are arguments for and against all these opposing positions about what it is that science is doing; one can imagine someone finding – or bringing it about in the ways that the skeptic's "ability" makes possible – that these arguments for and against the various alternatives are equally powerful (again, bearing in mind that "powerful" can be understood in different ways), and therefore suspending judgment about science's nature and goal.[25] As noted above, this is not something Sextus himself does, because like ancient philosophers in general, he does not seem to conceive of any alternatives to realism. But as far as I can see, that is a contingent fact not intrinsically related to the character of Pyrrhonism itself, and so I see no reason why a Pyrrhonist of the present day could not suspend judgment on this central issue in the philosophy of science. Here, then, if a contemporary skepticism about science is in one way closed off, as I argued earlier, it is made possible in another way that Sextus himself could not have imagined. The periodic table may no longer be up for debate; but we can now debate how to *conceive* the kind of thing the periodic table is.[26]

[25] This would not be suspension of judgment about *whether* there can be successful science (as in the previous paragraph), but suspension of judgment about *what* science is up to. One could imagine various ways in which the latter might lead to the former, but that would be a separate matter.

[26] Diego Machuca and Stéphane Marchand both stressed to me that many practicing scientists today have a pragmatic attitude toward what they are doing; they are not really concerned with the nature of reality, but with what *works*, with the *effects* that can be brought about in the world. I agree, and so we could also imagine a debate – possibly with suspension of judgment as the outcome – about whether one should *care about* what precisely science is doing. I take science to be concerned at least

Now, obviously, there are topics in fields other than philosophy or the natural sciences on which unresolved debate exists, and where the possibility of suspension of judgment therefore arises;[27] but we cannot attempt to survey the entire field of human inquiry. How are we to sum up this discussion? We have seen that there some subjects on which suspension of judgment now seems to be a realistic option, but which would not have occurred to Sextus himself. At least as important, though, is that there are large areas of inquiry the ancient counterparts of which Sextus understandably could regard as open to skeptical treatment, but that we can no longer regard as such. And for this reason the idea of a comprehensive suspension of judgment about *all* matters of theoretical inquiry, which seems to be central to Sextus' conception, is no longer a realistic option. Suspension of judgment is still possible about a great many things. But it is possible, when it is, on a case-by-case basis, for reasons particular to the issue or area in question, not as part of a global skeptical agenda.[28]

The remaining question is, what would be the point, or the payoff, of suspending judgment, in the areas in which it is a realistic option? I close with some reflections on this question.

IV Skeptical Tranquility, and What Is Left If We Abandon It

Suspension of judgment may often be an intellectually respectable attitude; on some topics, it may be *the only* intellectually respectable attitude.[29] It can

to some degree with explanation, and so I would not want to blur the line entirely between the scientist and the technician. For the same reason, Sextus' acceptance of some *technai* (*PH* 1.24), most notably medicine, does not seem to me to make him a kind of pragmatic scientist; for these *technai*, as I understand him, deliberately avoid any explanatory component. However, as far as I can see, nothing in the picture I have developed depends on these points.

[27] But here too, there are a great many matters in such fields that are *not* up for debate. For example, there is a large body of knowledge in comparative philology concerning the relations among the Indo-European languages. In *Against the Grammarians* Sextus plays havoc with the grammarians over etymology (*M* 1.241–7); he could not get away with this kind of approach today.

[28] In a seminal paper some decades ago Julia Annas argued that "Modern moral scepticism is essentially local" (Annas 1986, 17). My approach here is somewhat different from Annas'; I am considering how far Sextus' skepticism might be viable today (on any topic), whereas she was comparing his skepticism with what is now called skepticism in ethics. However, I think we are in fundamental agreement that skepticism today, of whatever form, is bound to be a piecemeal affair.

[29] In speaking of intellectual respectability, I may seem to be opting for what I called the rationalist interpretation of "equal strength." But I do not think this is necessarily the case. First, as I observed, even on the psychological interpretation the skeptic's "oppositional" activity is shaped to a large degree by his susceptibility to rational argument; it is simply that he regards this as a dispositional fact about himself rather than as his adoption of a set of norms. That would not prevent us, as outsiders, from describing what the skeptic does as intellectually respectable – to the extent that this is so. Second, when the skeptic relies for one side of the case – as we have seen that Sextus

help to guard against premature conclusions, to avoid entrenched dogmatisms, and to prevent us from being over-confident that we have plumbed the depths of reality. These points are obvious, but they are the kinds of reason why an element of skepticism in intellectual discourse is healthy.

But Sextus had in mind something much more ambitious than this. To recall, he spoke of a comprehensive *ability* to generate suspension of judgment; the skeptic is an expert at inducing suspension of judgment, even perhaps on occasions when it is *not* intellectually respectable by most people's lights. Why should one wish to push suspension of judgment as far as it can go? Sextus' answer, as we have seen, is that this results in *ataraxia*, tranquility. He sees a very intimate connection between tranquility and suspension of judgment; the skeptics found the former to follow the latter "as a shadow follows a body" (*PH* 1.29).[30] He does say that this happened *tuchikôs*, "fortuitously" (*PH* 1.26, 29). But this must mean that it was unexpected the first time it occurred, not that in general it is something that happens randomly or unpredictably; bodies cast shadows whenever the sun is shining,[31] in repeatable patterns dictated by the sun's position. The shadow simile, then, makes clear that Sextus takes tranquility to follow suspension of judgment regularly and reliably. And this fits entirely with the confident and unequivocal way in which he speaks of tranquility as the effect of suspension of judgment, whenever he does speak of it. It is never suggested that this effect is intermittent or unpredictable; we are simply told that the one leads to the other – and, by contrast, that failure to suspend judgment leads equally predictably to turmoil.[32] This, then, is why Sextus has an interest in maximizing his suspension of

sometimes does – on the brute force of ordinary experience or common sense rather than on arguments, this is not necessarily a violation of intellectual respectability; it can sometimes be a sensible move to question how much weight should be given to arguments versus immediate impressions (G. E. Moore's reaction to arguments challenging our knowledge of the external world is a good example: see Moore 1939), and this point seems neutral as between the psychological and the rationalist interpretations of skepticism. Third, as I noted earlier, Sextus' professed procedure seems to risk being contrived, and hence *not* intellectually respectable, in many cases. But that is just as true whichever interpretation one adopts; whether we see him as presenting equally good reasons, or equally powerful psychological forces, the likelihood of periodic contrivance is just the same.

[30] The same simile is attributed in DL to some skeptics who gave suspension of judgment as the *telos* or goal of life (9.107). Although Sextus has tranquility, not suspension of judgment, as his *telos* (*PH* 1.25), there may be no significant disagreement, given the common simile.

[31] Which, in Mediterranean countries, it usually is; calling tranquility suspension of judgment's shadow is meant, precisely, to emphasize the closeness of the relation.

[32] Diego Machuca and Stéphane Marchand both objected to my language of confidence, reliability, etc. in this context: is this not inconsistent with the Pyrrhonist program itself? I agree that this is a worry. But the worry is for Sextus, not for my interpretation of him. No doubt, if pressed, Sextus would say that he is not claiming tranquility as a *universal* effect of suspension of judgment. But what he actually says on the subject makes this hard to accept; he never gives any hint that there might be exceptions.

judgment; the result, he thinks, will be to maximize his tranquility. And one reason for this, the one on which I shall concentrate here, is that in suspending judgment on some topic, one is freed from the worries associated with a search for the truth about that topic that is incomplete, unsuccessful, or in other ways less than definitive. Is this an idea that we can take seriously?

It seems to me that the answer is no, and that is because Sextus' oppositional activity is not, as he suggests, a reliable recipe for tranquility. One way to begin framing the issue is that there are obvious senses in which some topics matter far more than others. Some issues in philosophy are hard to see as having any importance beyond themselves; as an example let me stipulate mereology, the branch of metaphysics concerned with parts, wholes, and their interrelations (those who disagree can simply substitute another). By contrast, many issues, in philosophy and elsewhere, clearly have significant consequences for our conception of ourselves and our place in the world: freedom and determinism, personal identity, the nature of rights and justice, the existence and nature of god, and the theory of evolution are a few cases that spring to mind. And some issues, such as climate change, may (depending on one's view of it) profoundly affect the future of life on earth, including the very survival of the human species and most others.

Now, assume that the topics we are dealing with, at any of these levels of importance, are subjects of genuine debate about which opposing positions are held, so that suspension of judgment is a realistic option. Is it the case that someone who suspends judgment about these topics will be more tranquil than someone actively involved in the debate – perhaps holding some definite position on the topic, but at any rate actively trying to reach a well-founded position? The answer is simply that it depends on these people's characters and circumstances – and this is true regardless of the perceived importance of the topic. One person might be highly engaged in mereology and highly frustrated at the state of debate in this area; compared with this person, someone who had come to see the opposing positions as equally strong, and had therefore suspended judgment about the whole topic, might well be calmer. But one can also imagine someone who came to this suspension of judgment as doing so in a state of great disappointment, feeling that he had wasted years of his life on these insoluble problems, or that it would have been so much more rewarding to have brought the debate to a firm conclusion; by contrast, a phlegmatic mereologist, who was engaged in the debates but did not take them or herself too seriously, might do better in terms of tranquility.

Similarly, agnosticism about the existence of god might be comforting for some – they are happy to give up worrying about such imponderable

questions – but terrifying for others; when the answer matters so much, the latter might say, finding that the considerations on either side are equally powerful, and thus being forced to suspend judgment, is the worst possible outcome. Finally, on climate change, we may compare the scientist who is sure the effects of climate change are real, and need serious and immediate action, with the skeptic who finds the voices (scientific and otherwise) for and against the existence of climate change equally powerful. The former might be desperately scared about the world's future, and the latter unconcerned because of not having a firm view about this.[33] But one can also imagine the former immersed in the project of saving the world and comfortable that she was at least doing everything in her power, and the latter paralyzed and confused by the thought that climate change *might or might not* be happening; after all, if it is happening, major changes of lifestyle will be necessary for much of the world, but if it is not happening, these changes, which many would regard as thoroughly disruptive, would all be for naught – so what are we to do?

Sextus' answer to this last question would be that a skeptic will do what his background and culture have trained him to do (*M* 11.165–6, *PH* 1.23–4). This has a certain sense in much of ordinary life, but in situations of potentially radical change, it is at its least helpful. Sextus would also say that a skeptic will have suspended judgment, and is therefore tranquil, about matters of good and bad, so that the question of whether to embark on a major change of lifestyle will not seem so fraught as it does to my hypothetical climate-change skeptic. This takes us into the other set of reasons Sextus gives for why the skeptic is more tranquil than the non-skeptic, reasons especially centered on good and bad. As noted earlier, I have discussed this subject elsewhere, and there is not space to consider it here. I will simply say that a similar account seems to me plausible concerning suspension of judgment about good and bad as concerning suspension of judgment in general; sometimes it will make a person more tranquil, sometimes less so – it all depends on the circumstances and the personalities involved.

I have drawn attention to numerous differences between the intellectual contexts of Sextus and ourselves. But this last point, that suspension of judgment does not have an especially close connection with tranquility, is not, as far as I can see, dependent on particular features of the contemporary world; Sextus' confidence that tranquility results from suspension of judgment seems ill-advised even for his own time. Some scholars regard

[33] Also, perhaps, because of not being overly concerned about the future of the world beyond his own lifetime; some people care about this more than others.

tranquility as an inessential feature of Sextus' skepticism.[34] I think they have a point, but it is a point about what Sextus *should* say, not about what he does say – he himself seems to attach great importance to it.[35] In any case, if we are trying to assess the extent to which Sextus' form of skepticism might still be viable today, we would do best to ignore its practical side as he presents it.

Without the practical side, the oppositional side becomes less momentous than Sextus makes it look; but it does not shrivel up entirely. I argued in the previous section that the idea of *universal* suspension of judgment is no longer open to us. But if we give up the idea of a link between suspension of judgment and tranquility, there is in any case no incentive to push for suspension of judgment in all possible circumstances. It may be true, as I have suggested, that in certain times and places one *could* bring about suspension of judgment about climate change. But if there is no more reason to expect tranquility to result than its opposite, the motivation for doing so disappears. And the same is true of any case where "equal strength" can only be produced in a manner that is, as I put it earlier, contrived. Of course, other motivations might be found. But Sextus offers no suggestion as to what they might be, and for me, at least, it is hard to see the merit of suspension of judgment in circumstances like these. What we are left with, it seems to me, is a recommendation to do one's best to consider all sides of an issue, to see how forceful they are and how well they can be supported or opposed, together with a prediction having some promise – that this process will often lead one to suspend judgment rather than coming down on one side or the other. As I suggested at the beginning of this section, there may well be some worthwhile consequences to following this recommendation and reaching this result – even if they are not the ones that Sextus himself describes.[36]

[34] See, e.g, Machuca 2006.

[35] Of course, one might also question whether tranquility per se is such a great benefit; might there not be other things in life worth caring about more? Gisela Striker, among others, has pressed this objection; see Striker 2004, 22; Striker 2010, 196.

[36] I thank Diego Machuca and Stéphane Marchand, the editors of the volume for which this chapter was originally written, for exceptionally helpful comments on an earlier version. I suspect that they still find much here with which to disagree. But in pushing me to clarify or modify a number of points, they made the chapter much better than it was.

Bibliography

Ackeren, Marcel van. 2013. "Dei Selbstbetrachtungen Marc Aurels. Ein stoischer Selbstdialog," in Michael Erler and Jan Erik Hessler, eds., *Argument und Literarischer Form in antiker Philosophie*, Akten des 3. Kongresses der Gesellschaft für antike Philosophie 2010 (Berlin: De Gruyter), 371 87.

Allen, James. 1993. "Pyrrhonism and Medical Empiricism: Sextus Empiricus on Evidence and Inference," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.37.1 (Berlin: De Gruyter), 646 90.

2001. *Inference from Signs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

2010. "Pyrrhonism and Medicine," in Richard Bett, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 232 48.

2011. "Carneades," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (online).

Annas, Julia. 1986. "Doing without Objective Values: Ancient and Modern Strategies," in Malcolm Schofield and Gisela Striker, eds., *The Norms of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 3 29; revised version in Stephen Everson, ed., *Companions to Ancient Thought 4: Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 193 220.

1993. *The Morality of Happiness* (New York: Oxford University Press).

2011. "Ancient Scepticism and Ancient Religion," in Benjamin Morison and Katerina Ierodiakonou, eds., *Episteme, etc.: Essays in Honour of Jonathan Barnes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 74 89.

Annas, Julia, and Barnes, Jonathan. 1985. *The Modes of Scepticism: Ancient Texts and Modern Interpretations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

(ed./trans.). 1994. *Sextus Empiricus, Outlines of Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cam bridge University Press). (Revised edition 2000.)

Ayer, A. J. 1936. *Language, Truth and Logic* (London: Gollancz).

1973. *The Central Questions of Philosophy* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson).

Barnes, Jonathan. 1990. *The Toils of Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univer sity Press).

1992. "Diogenes Laertius IX 61 116: The Philosophy of Pyrrhonism," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.36.6 (Berlin: De Gruyter), 4241 301.

1997. "The Beliefs of a Pyrrhonist," reprinted in Burnyeat and Frede 1997, 58 91. (Originally published in 1982.)

Beckwith, Christopher. 2015. *Greek Buddha: Pyrrho's Encounter with Early Buddhism in Central Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Benatar, David. 2006. *Better Never to Have Been: The Harm of Coming into Existence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Bett, Richard. 1989. "The Sophists and Relativism," *Phronesis* 34, 139–69.

1990. "Carneades' Distinction between Assent and Approval," *The Monist* 73, 3–20.

1993. "Scepticism and Everyday Attitudes in Ancient and Modern Philosophy," *Metaphilosophy* 24, 363–81.

(ed./trans.). 1997. *Sextus Empiricus*, *Against the Ethicists*, translated with an introduction and commentary (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

2000a. *Pyrrho, His Antecedents, and His Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

2000b. "Nietzsche on the Skeptics and Nietzsche as Skeptic," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 82, 62–86.

2002. Review of Brittain 2001, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review,* online: http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2002/2002-07-08.html.

2003. "Rationality and Happiness in the Greek Skeptical Traditions," in Jiyuan Yu and Jorge Gracia, eds., *Rationality and Happiness: From the Ancients to the Early Medievals* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press), 109–34.

(ed./trans.). 2005. *Sextus Empiricus, Against the Logicians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

2006. "Socrates and Skepticism," in S. Ahbel Rappe and R. Kamtekar, eds., *A Companion to Socrates* (Malden, MA: Blackwell), 298–311.

2007. "Sceptic Optics?," *Apeiron* 40, 95–121.

2008. "Nietzsche, the Greeks and Happiness (with Special Reference to Aristotle and Epicurus)," *Philosophical Topics* 33, no. 2, 45–70.

2009. "Sextus Empiricus," in Nick Trakakis and Graham Oppy, eds., *History of Western Philosophy and Religion*, vol. 1: *Ancient Philosophy and Religion* (Durham, UK: Acumen Publishing), 173–85.

2010. "Scepticism in Ethics," in Richard Bett, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 181–94.

2011. "Pyrrhonian Skepticism," in S. Bernecker and D. Pritchard, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology* (London: Routledge), 403–13.

2012. *Sextus Empiricus, Against the Physicists*, translated with an introduction and notes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

2013a. "Ancient Scepticism," in Roger Crisp, ed., *Oxford Handbook of the History of Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 112–28.

2013b. "Language, Gods, and Virtue: A Discussion of Robert Mayhew, *Prodicus the Sophist: Texts, Translations, and Commentary*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 44, 279–311.

2014. "Pyrrho," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (online).

2015a. "Pyrrhonism in Diogenes Laertius," in K. Vogt, ed., *Pyrrhonian Scepticism in Diogenes Laertius*, SAPERE Series vol. 25 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), 75–104.

2015b. "Pyrrho and the Socratic Schools," in Ugo Zilioli, ed., *From the Socratics to the Socratic Schools: Classical Ethics, Metaphysics and Epistemology* (New York: Taylor & Francis), 149 67.

2015c. "God (*M* IX.13 194)," in Keimpe Algra and Katerina Ierodiakonou, eds., *Sextus Empiricus and Ancient Physics* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univer sity Press), 33 73.

2017. "Skepticism," in W. Johnson and D. Richter, eds., *The Oxford Handbook to the Second Sophistic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 551 62.

2018a. "The Cyrenaics," in D. Machuca and B. Reed, eds., *Skepticism: From Antiquity to the Present* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing), 14 23.

2018b. *Sextus Empiricus, Against Those in the Disciplines*, translated with an introduction and notes (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Forthcoming. "Prodicus on the Choice of Heracles, Language, and Religion," in David Wolfsdorf, ed., *Early Greek Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Blomqvist, Jerker. 1974. "Die Skeptika des Sextus Empiricus," *Grazer Beiträge* 2, 7 14.

Bonazzi, Mauro. 2011. "A Pyrrhonian Plato? Again on Sextus on Aenesidemus on Plato," in D. Machuca, ed., *New Essays on Ancient Pyrrhonism* (Leiden: Brill), 11 26.

Boys Stones, George. 2001. *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford Univer sity Press).

Brennan, Tad. 1994. "Criterion and Appearance in Sextus Empiricus: The Scope of Sceptical Doubt, the Status of Sceptical Belief," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 39, 151 69. Revised version in Juha Sihvola (ed.), *Ancient Scepticism and the Sceptical Tradition*, Acta Philosophica Fennica 66 (Helsinki, 2000), 63 92.

Brennan, Tad, and Lee, Jongsuh. 2014. "A Relative Improvement," *Phronesis* 59, 246 71.

Brennan, Tad, and Roberts, Cliff. 2018. "Sextus Empiricus," in D. Machuca and B. Reed, eds., *Skepticism: From Antiquity to the Present* (London: Blooms bury Publishing), 125 44.

Brittain, Charles. 2001. *Philo of Larissa: The Last of the Academic Sceptics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

2005. "Arcesilaus," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (online).

(ed./trans.). 2006. *Cicero, On Academic Scepticism* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing).

2016. "Cicero's Sceptical Methods: The Example of the *De Finibus*," in Julia Annas and Gabor Betegh, eds., *Cicero's De Finibus: Philosophical Approaches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 12 40.

Brittain, Charles, and Palmer, John. 2001. "The New Academy's Appeals to the Presocratics," *Phronesis* 46, 38 72.

Brochard, Victor. 2002. *Les sceptiques grecs* (Paris: Librairie générale française). (Originally published in 1887.)

Bullock, Joseph. 2016. "The Challenges of the Modes of Agrippa," *Apeiron* 49, 409 35.

Burnyeat, Myles. 1982. "Idealism and Greek Philosophy: What Descartes Saw and Berkeley Missed," *Philosophical Review* 91, 3 40.

1983. "Can the Skeptic Live His Skepticism?," in Myles Burnyeat, ed., *The Skeptical Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 117 48. (Originally published in 1980.)

1984. "The Sceptic in His Place and Time," in Richard Rorty, J. B. Schneewind and Quentin Skinner, eds., *Philosophy in History: Essays on the Historiography of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 225 54.

Burnyeat, Myles, and Frede, Michael (eds.). 1997. *The Original Sceptics: A Controversy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing).

Bury, R. G. (ed./trans.). 1933. *Sextus Empiricus*, with an English translation, vol. I (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press Loeb Classical Library).

Castagnoli, Luca. 2018. "Aenesidemus," in D. Machuca and B. Reed, eds., *Skepticism: From Antiquity to the Present* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing), 67 80.

Chakravartty, Anjan. 2004. "Stance Relativism: Empiricism versus Metaphysics," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 35, 173 84.

2011. "A Puzzle about Voluntarism about Rational Epistemic Stances," *Synthese* 178, 37 48.

2017. "Scientific Realism," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, online: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/scientific realism/.

Chekola, Mark. 2007. Review of White 2006, *Journal of Happiness Studies* 8, 149 54.

Clayman, Dee. 2009. *Timon of Phlius: Pyrrhonism into Poetry* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter).

Cooper, John. 2004. "Arcesilaus: Socratic and Skeptic," in J. Cooper, *Knowledge, Nature, and the Good* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 81 103.

Cooper, John, and Procopé, J. F. (ed./trans.). 1995. *Seneca, Moral and Political Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Corti, Lorenzo. 2009. *Scepticisme et langage* (Paris: Vrin).

Decleva Caizzi, Fernanda. 1981. *Pirrone: Testimonianze* (Naples: Bibliopolis).

1992. "Aenesidemus and the Academy," *Classical Quarterly* 42, 176 89.

Dorsey, Dale. 2017. "Adaptive Preferences Are a Red Herring," *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 3, 465 84.

Ebert, Theodor. 1987. "The Origin of the Stoic Theory of Signs in Sextus Empiricus," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 5, 83 126.

1991. *Dialektiker und frühe Stoiker bei Sextus Empiricus: Untersuchungen zur Entstehung der Aussagenlogik, Hupomnemata 95* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek und Ruprecht).

2005. "La théorie du signe entre la medicine et la philosophie," in José Kany Turpin, ed., *Signe et Prédiction dans l'Antiquité* (Saint Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint Étienne), 51 63.

Eichorn, Roger. 2014. "How (Not) to Read Sextus Empiricus," *Ancient Philosophy* 34, 121 49.

Evans, Matthew. 2004. "Can Epicureans Be Friends?," *Ancient Philosophy* 24, 407 24.

Fogelin, Robert. 1994. *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification* (New York: Oxford University Press).

Frede, Michael. 1982. "The Method of the So Called Methodical School of Medicine," in Jonathan Barnes, Jacques Brunschwig, Myles Burnyeat and Malcolm Schofield, eds., *Science and Speculation: Studies in Hellenistic Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1 23, reprinted in Michael Frede, *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 261 78.

1985. *Galen, Three Treatises on the Nature of Science*, trans. Richard Walzer and Michael Frede with an introduction by Michael Frede (Indianapolis: Hack ett Publishing).

1997. "The Sceptic's Two Kinds of Assent and the Question of the Possibility of Knowledge," in M. Burnyeat and M. Frede, eds., *The Original Sceptics: A Controversy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing), 127 51. (Originally pub lished in 1984.)

2011. "An Anti Aristotelian Point of Method in Three Rationalist Doctors," in Benjamin Morison and Katerina Ierodiakonou, eds., *Episteme, etc.: Essays, in Honour of Jonathan Barnes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 115 37.

Furley, David. 1993. "Democritus and Epicurus on Sensible Qualities," in J. Brunschwig and M. Nussbaum, eds., *Passions and Perceptions: Studies in Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 72 94.

Gettier, Edmund. 1963. "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?," *Analysis* 23: 121 3.

Gill, Christopher. 2013. *Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, Books 1 6*, translated with an introduction and commentary (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Giovacchini, Julie. 2008. "Le 'dogmatisme négatif' des médecins empiriques: Sextus et Galien à la recherché d'une médecine sceptique," *Cahiers Philosophiques* 115, 63 80.

Grgic, Filip. 2006. "Sextus Empiricus on the Goal of Skepticism," *Ancient Philosophy* 26, 141 60.

Hadot, Pierre. 1987. *Exercises spirituels et philosophie antique*, 2nd edition (Paris: Études Augustiennes).

1995. *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, edited with an introduction by Arnold I. Davidson, translated by Michael Chase (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing).

Hallie, Philip P. (ed.). 1985. *Sextus Empiricus, Selections from the Major Writings on Scepticism, Man, and God*, revised edition, trans. Sanford G. Etheridge (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing). (Originally published in 1968.)

Hankinson, R. J. 1995. *The Sceptics* (London: Routledge).

2010. "Aenesidemus and the Rebirth of Pyrrhonism," in R. Bett, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 105 19.

Hare, R. M. 1981. *Moral Thinking: Its Levels, Method, and Point* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Henry, René (ed./trans.). 1962. *Photius*, *Bibliothèque*, vol. III (Paris: Collection Byzantine).

Hetherington, Stephen. 2011. "The Gettier Problem," in S. Bernecker and D. Pritchard, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology* (London: Routledge), 119 30.

Holford Strevens, Leofranc. 1997. "Favorinus: The Man of Paradoxes," in J. Barnes and M. Griffin, eds., *Philosophia Togata II: Plato and Aristotle at Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 188 217.

Honderich, Ted (ed.). 1985. *Morality and Objectivity* (London: Routledge).

Hume, David. 1993. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Eric Steinberg, 2nd edition (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing).

Inwood, Brad, and Gerson, Lloyd. 1997. *Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings*, 2nd edition (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing).

Ioppolo, Anna Maria. 2002. "Gli Accademici 'νεώτεροι' nel secondo secolo D.C.," *Méthexis* 15, 45 70.

2009. *La testimonianza di Sesto Empirico sull'Accademia scettica* (Naples: Bibliopolis).

Janáček, Karel. 1963. "Die Hauptschrift des Sextus Empiricus also Torso erhal ten?," *Philologus* 107, 271 7.

1976. "Zur Interpretation des Photius Abschnittes über Aenesidemos," *Eirene* 14, 93 100.

2000. *Sexti Empirici Indices*, 3rd edition (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore).

Jouanna, J. 2009. "Médecine et philosophie: sur la date de Sextus Empiricus et celle de Diogène Laërce à la lumière du corpus galénique," *Revue des études grecques* 122, 359 90.

Joyce, R., and Kirchin, S. (eds.). 2010. *A World without Values: Essays on John Mackie's Moral Error Theory* (Dordrecht: Springer).

Kant, Immanuel. 1981. *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing).

Kraut, Richard. 2006. "Doing without Morality: Reflections on the Meaning of *Dein* in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 30, 159 200.

Lasserre, François. 1975. "Un papyrus sceptique méconnu," in *Le monde grec: hommages à Claire Préaux* (Brussels: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles), 537 48. Reprinted in François Lasserre, *Nouveaux chapitres de literature grecque (1947 1986)*, Université de Lausanne, Publications de la faculté de lettres XXXI (Geneva: Droz, 1989), 181 96.

Lear, Jonathan. 1983. "Ethics, Mathematics and Relativism," *Mind* 92, 38 60.

Lévy, Carlos. 2010. "The Sceptical Academy: Decline and Afterlife," in R. Bett, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cam bridge University Press), 81 104.

Long, A. A. 1978. "Timon of Phlius: Pyrrhonist and Satirist," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, NS24: 68 91.

1988. "Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy," *Classical Quarterly* 38, 150 71.

Machuca, Diego. 2006. "The Pyrrhonist's ἀταραξία and φιλανθρωπία," *Ancient Philosophy* 26, 111 39.

2011. "Moderate Ethical Realism in Sextus' *against the Ethicists*?," in Diego Machuca, ed., *New Essays in Ancient Pyrrhonism* (Leiden: Brill), 143 78.

Mackie, J. L. 1977. *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (Harmondsworth: Penguin).

Mansfeld, Jaap. 1995. "Aenesidemus and the Academics," in L. Ayres, ed., *The Passionate Intellect* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers), 236 48.

Marchand, Stéphane. 2010. "Le sceptique cherche t il vraiment la vérité?," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* No. 1, 125 41.

Marco, M. di. 1989. *Timone di Fliunte: Silli* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo).

Mates, Benson. 1996. *The Skeptic Way: Sextus Empiricus' Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (New York: Oxford University Press).

Mill, John Stuart. 1987. *Utilitarianism*, in Ryan 1987.

Moller, Dan. 2004. "The Pyrrhonian Skeptic's Telos," *Ancient Philosophy* 24.

Moore, G. E. 1939. "Proof of an External World," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 25, 273 300; reprinted in Thomas Baldwin, ed., *G. E. Moore: Selected Writings* (London: Routledge, 2013), 147 70.

Morison, Benjamin. 2011. "The Logical Structure of the Sceptic's Opposition," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 40, 265 95.

2014. "Sextus Empiricus," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, online at https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/sextus empiricus/.

Morrison, Donald. 1990. "The Ancient Sceptic's Way of Life," *Metaphilosophy* 21, 204 22.

Neta, Ram (ed.). 2014. *Current Controversies in Epistemology* (London: Routledge).

Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1966. *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House).

1997. *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Richard Polt with introduction by Tracy Strong (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing).

Nussbaum, Martha. 1994. *The Therapy of Desire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Obdrzalek, Suzanne. 2006. "Living in Doubt: Carneades' Pithanon Recon sidered," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 31, 243 79.

O'Keefe, Tim. 2002. "The Cyrenaics on Pleasure, Happiness, and Future Con cern," *Phronesis* 47, 395 416.

2011. "The Cyreniacs vs. the Pyrrhonists on Knowledge of Appearances," in D. Machuca, ed., *New Essays on Ancient Pyrrhonism* (Leiden: Brill), 27 40.

Oreskes, Naomi, and Conway, Eric. 2010. *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming* (New York: Bloomsbury).

Palmer, John. 2000. "Skeptical Investigation," *Ancient Philosophy* 20, 351 75.

Pellegrin, Pierre (ed./trans.). 1997. *Sextus Empiricus*, *Esquisses pyrrhoniennes* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil).

Pellegrin, Pierre. 2005. "Scepticisme et sémiologie médicale," in José Kany Turpin, ed., *Signe et prédiction dans l'antiquité* (Saint Étienne: Publi cations de l'Université de Saint Étienne), 65 82.

Pérez Jean, Brigitte. 2005. *Dogmatisme et scepticisme: L'héraclitisme d'Énésidème*. Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires de Septentrion.

Perin, Casey. 2006. "Pyrrhonian Scepticism and the Search for Truth," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 30, 337 60.

2010a. *The Demands of Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press).

2010b. "Scepticism and Belief," in Richard Bett, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 145 64.

2013. "Making Sense of Arcesilaus," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 45, 313 40.

Philippson, Robert. 1881. *De Philodemi libro, qui est Peri sêmeiôn kai sêmeiôseôn et Epicureorum doctrina logica* (Berlin: Berliner Buchhdruckerie Actien Gesellschaft).

Polito, Roberto. 2004. *The Sceptical Road: Aenesidemus' Appropriation of Heraclitus* (Leiden: Brill).

2014. *Aenesidemus of Cnossos: Testimonia*, edited with introduction and com mentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Powers, Nathan. 2010. "The System of the Sceptical Modes in Sextus Empiricus," *Apeiron* 43, no. 4, 157 71.

Pritchard, Duncan. 2011. "Wittgensteinian Pyrrhonism," in Diego Machuca, ed., *Pyrrhonism in Ancient, Modern, and Contemporary Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer), 193 202.

Psillos, Stathis. 2006. "Scientific Realism," in Donald M. Borchert, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2nd edition (Detroit: Macmillan), vol. 8, 688 94.

Rawls, John. 1971. *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

1993. *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press).

Ribeiro, Brian. 2002. "Is Pyrrhonism Psychologically Possible?," *Ancient Philosophy* 22, 319 33.

Rogers, Ben. 1999. *A. J. Ayer: A Life* (New York: Grove Press).

Ryan, Alan (ed.). 1987. *John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, Utilitarianism and Other Essays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin).

Sartre, Jean Paul. 1973. *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans. P. Mairet (London: Eyre Methuen).

Schneewind, J. B. 1996. "Voluntarism and the Foundations of Ethics," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 70, no. 2, 25 41. Reprinted in J. B. Schneewind, *Essays on the History of Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 405 24.

Schofield, Malcolm. 2007. "Aenesidemus: Pyrrhonist and 'Heraclitean,'" in A. M. Ioppolo and D. Sedley, eds., *Pyrrhonists, Patricians, Platonizers: Hellenistic Philosophy in the Period 155 86 BC* (Naples: Bibliopolis), 271 338.

Sedley, David. 1992. "Sextus Empiricus and the Atomist Criteria of Truth," *Elenchos* 13, 21–56.

1997. "Philosophical Allegiance in the Greco Roman World," in M. Griffin and J. Barnes, eds., *Philosophia Togata I: Essays on Philosophy and Roman Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 97–119. (Originally published in 1989.)

(ed.). 2012. *The Philosophy of Antiochus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

2015. "Diogenes Laertius on the Ten Pyrrhonist Modes," in K. Vogt, ed., *Pyrrhonian Skepticism in Diogenes Laertius*, SAPERE Series vol. 25 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), 171–85.

Sellars, John. 2010. "Marcus Aurelius, the Philosopher," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. Michael Gagarin, 7 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press), vol. 4, 345–6.

Sidelle, Alan. (2006). "Constructivism and Conventionalism," in Donald M. Borchert, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2nd edition (Detroit: Macmillan), vol. 2, 474–6.

Singer, Peter. 1979. *Practical Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Sinnott Armstrong, Walter (ed.). 2004. *Pyrrhonian Skepticism* (New York: Oxford University Press).

2006. *Moral Skepticisms* (New York: Oxford University Press).

Spinelli, Emidio. 2000. "Sextus Empiricus, the Neighbouring Philosophies and the Sceptical Tradition," in J. Sihvola, ed., *Ancient Scepticism and the Sceptical Tradition, Acta Philosophica Fennica* 66, 35–61.

2005. *Questioni scettiche: Letture introduttive al pirronismo antico* (Rome: Lithos editrice snc).

Striker, Gisela. 1983. "The Ten Tropes of Aenesidemus," in Myles Burnyeat, ed., *The Skeptical Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 95–115.

1990. "Happiness as Tranquillity," *The Monist* 73, 97–110.

2001. "Scepticism as a Kind of Philosophy," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 83, 113–29.

2004. "Historical Reflections on Classical Pyrrhonism and Neo Pyrrhonism," in Sinnott Armstrong 2004, 13–24.

2010. "Academics versus Pyrrhonists, Reconsidered," in Richard Bett, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 195–207.

Stroud, Barry. 1984. *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism* (New York: Oxford University Press).

Svavarsson, Svavar. 2010. "Pyrrho and Early Pyrrhonism," in Richard Bett, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 36–57.

Terlazzo, Rosa. 2017. "Must Adaptive Preferences Be Prudentially Bad for Us?," *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 3, 412–29.

Thorsrud, Harald. 2010. "Arcesilaus and Carneades," in R. Bett, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 58–80.

Tor, Shaul. 2014. "Sextus and Wittgenstein on the End of Justification," *International Journal for the Study of Skepticism* 4, no. 2, 81 108.

Tredennick, Hugh. 1969. *Plato*, The Last Days of Socrates, translated with an introduction (Harmondsworth: Penguin).

Tsouna McKirahan, Voula. 2002. "Is There an Exception to Greek Eudaimon ism?," in M. Canto Sperber and P. Pellegrin, eds., *Le style de le pensée: receuil de texts en hommage à Jacques Brunschwig* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres), 464 89.

Tuominen, Miira. 2009. *The Ancient Commentators on Plato and Aristotle* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Unger, Peter. 1975. *Ignorance: A Case for Scepticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Van Fraassen, Bas. 2002. *The Empirical Stance* (New Haven: Yale University Press).

Veenhoven, Ruut. 2018. *World Database of Happiness: Archive of Research Findings on Subjective Enjoyment of Life*, online: www.worlddatabaseofhappiness .eur.nl.

Viano, Cristina. 2002. "'Énésidème selon Héraclite': la substance corporelle du temps," *Revue Philosophique* 192, 141 58.

Vogt, Katja Maria. 1998. *Skepsis und Lebenspraxis: Das pyrrhonische Leben ohne Meinungen* (München: Alber Verlag).

2010. "Scepticism and Action," in Richard Bett, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 165 80.

2012a. *Belief and Truth: A Skeptic Reading of Plato* (New York: Oxford University Press).

2012b. "Appearances and Assent: Sceptical Belief Reconsidered," *Classical Quarterly* 62, no. 2, 648 63.

2015. "Introduction: Skepticism and Metaphysics in Diogenes Laertius," in K. Vogt, ed., *Pyrrhonian Skepticism in Diogenes Laertius*, SAPERE Series vol. 25 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), 3 14.

Walker, Matthew. Forthcoming. "Aristotle on Wittiness," in Pierre Destrée and Franco Trivigno, eds., *Laughter and Comedy in Ancient Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Warnock, Mary. 2003. *Utilitarianism, on Liberty, Essay on Bentham, Together with Selected Writings of Jeremy Bentham and John Austin*, edited with an intro duction (Malden, MA: Blackwell).

Warren, James. 2002. *Epicurus and Democritean Ethics: An Archaeology of Ataraxia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

2015. "Precursors of Pyrrhonism: DL 9.67 73," in K. Vogt, ed., *Pyrrhonian Skepticism in Diogenes Laertius*, SAPERE Series vol. 25 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), 105 21.

Weiner, Eric. 2008. *The Geography of Bliss: One Grump's Search for the Happiest Places in the World* (New York: Hachette Book Group USA).

White, Nicholas. 2006. *A Brief History of Happiness* (Oxford: Blackwell).

Williams, Bernard. 1981. "Persons, Character and Morality," in *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1 19. (Originally published in 1976.)

Williams, Michael. 1988. "Scepticism without Theory," *Review of Metaphysics* 41, 547–88.

2010. "Descartes' Transformation of the Sceptical Tradition," in Richard Bett, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 288–313.

Woodruff, Paul. 2010. "The Pyrrhonian Modes," in Richard Bett, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 208–31.

Index Locorum

Aristotle
Metaphysics (*Met.*)
980a21: 3
984b17–18: 47
986b21–2: 27
1005b35–1006a2: 153
1008b11–12: 65
1008b15–16: 47
1010b10–11: 47
Nicomachean Ethics (*NE*)
1095a17–18: 189
1095a18–20: 189
1095b2–4: 46
1097b22–3: 189
1097b28–30: 46
1098a16–18: 137
1098a18: 200
1101a8–13: 137
1101a9–13: 200
1178a2: 137
On the Heavens (*De Caelo*)
271b10–11: 46
On Interpretation (*De interpretatione*)
16a29–31: 46
On the Soul (*De anima*)
408a1–4: 47
Physics
212b22: 56
216a26–7: 47
Posterior Analytics
1.3: 101
Rhetoric
1410b6: 46

Athenaeus
505d–e: 50
505e: 50
544a–b: 199
610b: 51

Aulius Gellius
3.17.4: 50
11.5.5: 37
11.5.6: 37

Cicero (Cic.)
Academica (*Acad.*)
1.45: 37
2.7–9: 224
2.28: 40
2.79–82: 97
2.82: 97
2.99–104: 170
2.104: 40
On Ends (*De fin.*)
2.2: 54

Clement
Miscellanies (*Stromata, Strom.*)
1.14.63, 3: 51
1.14.64, 2–4: 26
2.21.130, 7–8: 199
5.14.109, 3 DK21B15: 61
7.4.22, 1 DK21B16: 61

Diogenes Laertius (DL)
2.19: 51
2.87–8: 199
3.7: 51
3.26: 50
3.49: 39
4.33: 37
4.42: 37, 51
4.67: 51
5.11: 48
7.4: 69
7.15: 69
7.132: 90
7.174: 24

Diogenes Laertius (DL) (cont.)
7.177: 24
9.21: 27
9.23: 52
9.62: 171
9.64–5: 3, 89, 210
9.65: 149
9.66: 148
9.67: 28, 149, 193
9.69: 70
9.71: 27–8, 149
9.71–3: 26
9.72: 26, 28
9.72–3: 26
9.73: 31
9.79–89: 108
9.85: 92, 115
9.86: 115
9.87: 38, 93, 115
9.88–9: 119
9.89: 119
9.94: 75
9.96: 75
9.96–7: 76
9.97: 75
9.99: 75
9.100: 75
9.101: 75
9.102–8: 28
9.106: 108
9.107: 240
9.111: 49
9.116: 212
10.22: 192
10.113: 62
10.132: 62

Epictetus
Discourses (*Diss.*)
1.5.8: 64
1.27.19: 64
2.19.15–16: 64
3.7: 32

Epicurus
On Nature
34.30 LS20C13–14: 24

Eusebius (usually quoting Aristocles of Messene)
Preparation for the Gospel (Praeparatio evangelica, Praep. evang.)
14.17.10: 26
14.18.1–5: 151
14.18.2: 191
14.18.4: 172
14.18.11: 92
14.18.19: 3, 49
14.18.26: 148
14.18.29: 43
14.18.30: 43

Galen (including works spuriously attributed to him)
History of Philosophy (*Hist. philos.*)
3 (p. 601 Diels): 26
On Hippocrates' Book about Surgery (*In Hipp. de med. off.*)
18b.658.10–12K: 29
On Medical Experience
15.7 DK68B125: 34
On the Sects for Beginners (*Sect. int.*)
pp. 1–2 Helmreich: 212
pp. 3–4 Helmreich: 212
p. 10 Helmreich: 214
p. 11 Helmreich: 215
p. 12 Helmreich: 214
p. 24, 6–21 Helmreich: 218
On the Therapeutic Method (*De methodo medendi, MM*)
10.319.17–18K: 214
10.349.15–16K: 214
10.928.5–6K: 214

Lucretius
3.371: 24
4.472: 64
4.507–10: 64
4.1160–9: 63
4.1171–84: 63
4.1188–91: 63
5.622: 24

Philo of Alexandria
On Drunkenness (*De ebr.*)
181: 94

Photius
Bibliotheca (*Library, Bibl.*)
169b18–170b35: 191
169b18–171a4: 90, 225
169b19–26: 151
169b21–30: 3, 172
169b24: 191
169b26–7: 89
169b27: 191
169b28–9: 78
169b32–3: 97
169b32–5: 37
169b36–170a11: 37
170a12–14: 29

170a14–15: 37, 72, 225
170a14–17: 37
170a18–19: 29
170a22–38: 37
170a30–5: 29
170b3–22: 90
170b6–7: 90
170b12–17: 71
170b15–16: 90
170b16: 71
170b17–22: 106
170b18–22: 74
170b34–5: 75

Plato
Apology
33c4: 54
Phaedrus
230a: 56
Protagoras
314e3–316a2: 50
Republic
343a: 52
474d–e: 63
479a–b: 103
514b6: 51
Theaetetus
151e: 136
151e–152a: 218
151e–152e: 136
156a–157c: 35
156a–160a: 136
179e–180c: 136

Plutarch
Lamprias Catalog 64: 38

Seneca
On Anger (*De ira*)
1.21: 64
2.10.5: 48

Sextus Empiricus
Against Those in the Disciplines (*Adversus mathematicos* 1–6, *M* 1–6)
1.3: 24
1.7: 227
1.26: 22
1.29: 22, 60
1.39–40: 117
1.49: 18
1.99–120: 117
1.157: 127
1.179: 6
1.180: 127
1.183: 127
1.241–7: 239
1.260: 177
1.270: 194
1.271: 194
1.294: 194
1.305: 149–50
2.106: 22, 60
2.109: 127
3.1–2: 70
3.2: 89, 210
3.7–17: 127
3.97: 127
3.99: 127
5.2: 18
5.4–42: 117
6.1–3: 18
6.27: 194
6.36: 194
6.47: 6
6.51: 6
6.52: 22, 60
6.66: 89
Against the Logicians (*Adversus mathematicos* 7–8, *M* 7–8)
7.1: 17
7.1–24: 126
7.2–24: 10
7.8: 51
7.25–45: 126
7.25–445: 20
7.26: 29
7.30: 17
7.46: 29
7.46–260: 29, 126, 211
7.48: 29
7.48–88: 29
7.150–89: 170
7.158: 190
7.159–65: 40
7.166–89: 190
7.184: 190
7.208: 98
7.225: 6
7.261: 21
7.261–445: 21, 126, 211
7.263: 32
7.264: 56
7.269–75: 57
7.272: 57
7.315: 126
7.339: 126
7.340: 126
7.341: 126
7.345: 30, 92, 108, 117

Sextus Empiricus (cont.)
7.349: 32–3
7.359: 55
7.411–14: 97
7.426: 126
7.429: 126
7.433: 56
7.443: 8, 21, 112, 221
8.1: 29
8.12: 6
8.16: 126
8.19: 126
8.21–2: 126
8.28–9: 126
8.50: 126
8.60: 32
8.70–4: 117
8.78: 126
8.86: 126
8.109: 6
8.113–18: 117
8.122: 126
8.145–50: 215
8.151: 82
8.151–5: 215
8.152: 216
8.152–3: 85
8.152–5: 83
8.154: 83
8.156: 216
8.156–8: 18, 216
8.159–60: 8, 21
8.159–61: 73, 112
8.159–299: 216
8.191: 17
8.193: 84
8.200: 84
8.215: 79
8.216: 79
8.220: 79
8.221: 80
8.234: 79
8.257: 126
8.261: 126
8.275–97: 22
8.288: 85
8.298: 21, 112
8.347: 126
8.370: 126
8.379: 126
8.436: 126
8.443: 55
8.464: 126
8.470: 10
8.476–7: 112

Against the Physicists (*Adversus mathematicos* 9–10, *M* 9–10)
9.1: 10, 17
9.1–2: 117
9.1–12: 210
9.2–3: 12
9.18: 56
9.41: 56
9.42: 55
9.47: 127
9.49: 18, 20, 177
9.50: 18–20, 177
9.60–137: 20
9.137: 112
9.137–90: 20
9.182–90: 54
9.185: 54
9.187: 54
9.191: 112
9.191–2: 177
9.192: 118
9.195: 90
9.195–267: 21
9.218: 109
9.218–26: 91
9.337: 32–3, 90
9.352: 55
10.2: 6
10.15: 19
10.19: 17
10.31: 56
10.36: 19, 91
10.38: 91
10.41: 91
10.45: 19
10.56: 58
10.62: 227
10.66–8: 227
10.85–120: 22
10.99: 22
10.102: 22
10.112–18: 22
10.155: 57
10.160–2: 58
10.161: 58
10.168: 22, 112
10.197: 70, 89
10.216: 32–3, 90
10.220: 6
10.233: 90
10.248–84: 21
10.249–84: 117
10.284–309: 21
10.261: 6

Against the Ethicists (*Adversus mathematicos* 11, *M* 11)
11.1: 17, 149
11.1–167: 118
11.47: 177
11.110–40: 191
11.110–67: 4, 156, 173, 229
11.111: 153
11.114: 105
11.116: 157
11.118: 76, 105
11.130: 76
11.135: 17
11.136: 17
11.138: 17
11.140: 76, 191
11.141: 172, 192, 198
11.141–67: 191
11.143: 192
11.146: 157
11.147: 192
11.150–61: 192
11.152: 8
11.158–60: 143
11.159: 192
11.159–61: 173
11.161: 192
11.162–6: 10
11.164–6: 159
11.165: 18
11.165–6: 242
11.166: 160, 177
11.167: 196
11.180: 6
11.183: 127
11.212: 58
11.229: 127
11.230: 127
11.243: 6
Outlines of Pyrrhonism (*PH*)
1.1–3: 42, 123, 175
1.1–4: 7
1.3: 39
1.4: 9, 15, 36, 42
1.5: 16, 26, 42
1.5–6: 109
1.6: 42
1.7: 8, 25
1.8: 5, 7, 9, 110, 145, 152, 155, 173–5, 194, 220–1, 227–8
1.11: 16
1.12: 4–5, 7, 36, 115, 155, 172, 228
1.13: 110, 138, 154, 222
1.16–17: 44
1.18: 6–7, 16, 42, 175, 216
1.19: 9, 14
1.19–20: 23, 154
1.20: 14, 44
1.21–4: 116, 158, 171
1.21–30: 138
1.23: 86, 176
1.23–4: 152, 242
1.24: 18–19, 159, 176, 239
1.25: 36, 145, 173, 194, 197, 240
1.25–30: 4, 156, 158, 174
1.26: 4–5, 172, 228, 240
1.26–30: 229
1.27: 157, 194
1.27–30: 173, 194, 229
1.28–9: 155
1.29: 5, 240
1.30: 141, 143, 154, 161, 173, 229
1.31: 231
1.31–4: 7
1.31–186: 175
1.35: 114
1.35–86: 108
1.35–179: 230–1
1.36: 7, 92, 108
1.38: 100, 111, 238
1.38–9: 100
1.39: 115
1.40–78: 59
1.59: 114
1.59–61: 59
1.60: 6
1.61: 6, 112, 114
1.62: 6, 59–60
1.63: 60
1.63–72: 59
1.65: 60
1.65–6: 60
1.68: 60
1.69: 60
1.74: 6
1.76: 6
1.78: 112
1.79: 118
1.87–9: 113
1.89: 117
1.91: 118
1.99: 114
1.100: 35, 114, 118
1.101: 111
1.118: 91, 94
1.121: 99
1.121–3: 100
1.123: 99
1.124: 104
1.128: 104, 113

Sextus Empiricus (cont.)
1.134: 104
1.135: 104
1.140: 104, 113, 115
1.144: 104
1.161: 236
1.161–2: 177
1.163: 104, 113–14
1.164: 92, 108
1.164–77: 109
1.165: 121
1.166: 121
1.165–9: 119
1.167: 111, 120–2
1.168: 121
1.169: 121, 124
1.169–77: 122
1.170: 121
1.175: 121–2
1.177: 121–2
1.180: 108
1.180–5: 74, 109
1.180–6: 90
1.183: 90
1.185–6: 121
1.186: 122
1.187: 9, 13
1.189: 14
1.190–1: 14
1.194–5: 13
1.196: 13
1.197: 13
1.201: 13–14
1.204: 15
1.207: 17
1.209: 8, 26, 31
1.209–41: 25
1.210: 27, 31, 33
1.210–12: 31
1.211: 33
1.212: 33
1.213: 27, 31, 34
1.213–14: 34
1.214: 34
1.215: 27, 31, 35, 198, 206
1.216: 35, 218
1.217: 27, 31, 35
1.217–19: 35
1.218: 35
1.219: 35
1.220: 27, 31
1.221: 38–9
1.222: 38–9
1.223: 39
1.224: 53
1.224–5: 39
1.225: 39
1.226–31: 39
1.230: 40
1.232: 41
1.233: 41
1.234: 41
1.235: 40
1.236: 27, 31, 41
1.236–41: 212
1.237–41: 41
1.241: 41
2.1: 16
2.1–11: 10
2.1–192: 126
2.6: 16
2.9: 8, 16
2.10: 8
2.12: 16
2.19–20: 123–6
2.25: 117
2.35–6: 126–7
2.45: 117
2.55–6: 117
2.56: 126
2.68: 126
2.78: 126
2.79: 21, 112
2.84: 117
2.85: 123, 126
2.89: 126
2.90: 126
2.91–3: 126
2.95: 6
2.97–8: 215
2.99: 82
2.100–1: 83, 215
2.101: 83
2.102: 18, 141–2, 216
2.103: 22, 73–4
2.103–33: 216
2.113–14: 126
2.124: 126
2.128: 126
2.130: 22, 112
2.130–3: 22
2.132–3: 22
2.134–204: 110
2.163: 6
2.166–7: 6
2.182: 126
2.183: 126
2.192: 21, 112
2.193–259: 126
2.205: 16

2.215: 6
2.238: 177
3.1: 16, 117, 210
3.2: 18, 20, 177
3.8: 127
3.13: 90
3.17–18: 21
3.22: 127
3.24: 127
3.29: 112
3.30: 6
3.35–6: 127
3.42: 6
3.50: 117
3.53: 127
3.54: 6
3.55: 210
3.62: 6
3.65: 19
3.65–6: 227
3.66: 21
3.81: 21, 112
3.102: 6
3.118: 91
3.119: 19
3.120: 21
3.135: 21, 112
3.167: 16, 43
3.167–8: 13
3.168–238: 118
3.172–5: 194
3.177: 194
3.182: 153
3.198–234: 118
3.218: 19
3.218–19: 177
3.219: 19
3.235: 19, 153
3.235–6: 194
3.235–8: 4, 156, 173, 229
3.236: 143, 173
3.249: 6
3.270–2: 6
3.278: 16, 43
3.280: 185
3.280–1: 10, 165
3.281: 11

Index

This index does not include entries for Sextus Empiricus, Pyrrhonian Skepticism, suspension of judgment (or epochê), or dogmatism, since these terms are pervasive throughout the volume. There are several subentries under Skepticism; but for the same reason, no attempt has been made to catalog the general term Skepticism. Modern scholars are included only if they are mentioned in the main text.

Academic skepticism: *see* Skepticism, Academic
Aenesidemus, 3, 25, 27, 29–33, 36–37, 42–43, 69–84, 88–95, 97, 100–1, 104–8, 115–16, 121, 129, 166, 191, 225
Agrippa, 108, 128, 233
Allen, James, 69, 80–81, 86
Annas, Julia, 27, 94, 96, 101–3, 107, 198
Anniceris, 199
Appearances, reliance on, 9, 23, 138–39, 158–59, 168–76
Arcesilaus, 4, 40–41, 44–45, 53–54, 170–71, 190
Aristocles, 43, 92, 94, 191
Aristophanes, 49, 236
Aristotle, 3, 24, 46–49, 56, 58, 61, 64–65, 69, 101, 136–37, 149, 166, 189, 198, 200, 211, 219, 226
Asclepiades, 79
Ataraxia, 4–7, 9–11, 13, 36, 76, 110, 125, 138, 142, 145–46, 148, 155–56, 158, 163–65, 172–75, 179–85, 191–98, 200, 205–7, 221–22, 228–29, 239–43
Athenaeus, 50, 199
Aulus Gellius, 37

Barnes, Jonathan, 27, 94, 96, 101–3, 107, 116, 124–25, 128
Bentham, Jeremy, 206
Brochard, Victor, 79
Burnyeat, Myles, 133, 144, 147, 151, 217–19, 237

Carneades, 4, 39–40, 54, 56, 170, 172, 190
Chakravartty, Anjan, 209, 211, 217
Chrysippus, 55–56, 60–61
Cicero, 40, 54, 224
Clayman, Dee, 48
Cleanthes, 56
Clitomachus, 39–40
Commitment to values, skeptic's lack of, 143–48, 160, 162–64, 205
Cyrenaics, 25, 35–36, 198–200, 206

Democritus, 24–29, 34–35, 39, 55
Diogenes Laertius, 26–31, 33, 38, 49–50, 52, 62, 75–77, 87–89, 91–105, 108, 115–16, 119, 122, 199

Ebert, Theodor, 69, 86–87
Empiric school of medicine, 25, 41, 177, 211–15, 217
Epictetus, 62, 64
Epicureanism, 24, 61–63, 98–99, 148–49, 165, 192, 198, 200, 206
Epicurus, 24, 61–63, 192–93
Equal strength: *see* Isostheneia
Erasistratus, 79
Eudaimonia, 136, 166, 170, 172, 189–208
  as not precisely equivalent to happiness, 189, 201, 205

Fogelin, Robert, 233

Galen, 29, 212–15, 217
Gerson, lloyd, 71
Gettier, Edmund, 59, 65
Gorgias, 50

Hankinson, R. J., 32
Happiness: see *Eudaimonia*
Hare, R. M., 232
Henry, René, 71
Heraclitus, 24–27, 29, 31–34, 42, 61, 90

Herophilus, 79
Hippias, 50
Hume, David, 133, 151, 224
Humor in philosophy, 46–65

Inquiry: see Skepticism, as inquiry
Inwood, Brad, 71
Isostheneia, 4–5, 39, 110, 138–40, 145–46, 152, 174–75, 183, 194, 220–21, 227–28, 230–32, 234–36, 243

Janáček, Karel, 92

Kant, Immanuel, 65, 202, 218

Lucretius, 24, 62–64

Mackie, J. L., 155, 163, 168, 232
Marcus Aurelius, 9
Melissus, 53
Methodic school of medicine, 41–42, 45
Mill, John Stuart, 65, 149, 206
Modes, 38, 90, 93–94, 96–99, 101–29, 146, 175
  Two Modes, 108–9
  Five Modes, 92, 100–1, 103, 106, 108–9, 115–16, 118–28, 233
  Eight Modes, 74–75, 90–91, 106, 108–9, 116, 121
  Ten Modes, 59, 91–93, 98, 100–1, 104, 106, 108–18, 120–21, 124, 236, 238
Morison, Benjamin, 110–14

Natural science, prospects for skepticism about, 183–84, 233–39
Nature, requirements for a grasp of, 77–78, 102–5, 115–16
Nietzsche, Friedrich, 3, 65, 181, 206–8

Parmenides, 26, 211
Passivity, 153, 160, 162, 179, 216, 222
Perin, Casey, 7–8
Phaedo, 50
Philippson, Robert, 86
Philo of Alexandria, 93–94, 98
Philo of Larissa, 40, 224
Photius, 37, 70–79, 81–82, 84, 90–91, 105–6, 191
Place, 91–97, 101–3, 105–6
Plato, 8, 24, 38–39, 44–45, 50–51, 53–54, 56, 61, 97, 103, 136–37, 149, 211, 226
Plutarch, 61
Prodicus, 50, 56
Protagoras, 25–26, 35–36, 50, 136
Pyrrho, 3–4, 25–26, 28–29, 48–49, 52–53, 69–71, 89, 138, 143, 148–50, 166, 169, 191, 193, 207, 210, 225

Realism, 209, 211, 213, 217–20, 237–38

Sartre, Jean-Paul, 164
Schofield, Malcolm, 32
Sedley, David, 93
Self, 133–50, 161, 179–80
  as including rationality, 135–36, 139–40, 143
  as including values, 135–36, 139–40, 143
Seneca, 9, 62–65
Signs, 18, 22, 69–88, 126, 211, 215–16
  commemorative, 73, 77, 81–86, 215; *see also* recollective
  indicative, 18, 73, 81, 84, 215–16
  recollective, 18, 215–16; *see also* commemorative
Singer, Peter, 232
Sinnott-Armstrong, Walter, 168
Skeptical phrases, 13–15
Skepticism
  Academic, 12, 24–25, 27, 36–42, 44–45, 53–54, 123, 170–72, 189–90, 193, 195, 223–26
  as ability (*dunamis*), 7, 9, 110–14, 116, 121, 128, 152, 173–74, 183, 228, 231, 238, 240
  as inquiry, 6–8, 11–12, 23, 175–76
  as not necessarily a philosophy, 6, 15–17, 42–45, 174
Socrates, 4, 24, 50–54, 56, 103, 136, 207
Spinelli, Emidio, 93
Stances, epistemic, 209–11, 213, 219–20, 225
Strato, 57
Stoicism, 24, 37, 56, 58, 60–62, 148–49, 156, 162, 166, 192–94, 198, 200, 219, 224

Timon of Phlius, 3, 26, 39, 48–53, 65, 69–70, 89, 149–50, 191, 210
Tranquility: *see Ataraxia*

Unger, Peter, 168

Van Fraassen, Bas, 209, 211
Vogt, Katja Maria, 28
Voluntarism, epistemological, 209–10, 220, 222–25

White, Nicholas, 202–3
Williams, Bernard, 162
Williams, Michael, 112, 114
Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 73, 216
World Database of Happiness, 203

Xenophanes, 25–27, 39, 53, 61, 149

Zeno of Citium, 56, 69
Zeno of Elea, 26, 53